More Minimal Conditions for Painting

by

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Submitted in the fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Art

Signed statement of originality

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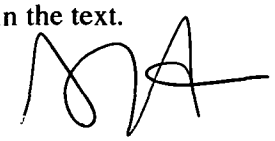

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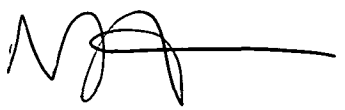

Abstract

The grid, pristine industrial materials, systems, the monochrome - these are some of the more recognisable characteristics of Minimal art. These characteristics are used, or more correctly *misused,* in this project in such a way as to question the values commonly attributed to them; to insert evidence of use and the seed of doubt.

The realities of the everyday – the wear and tear of use – are contradictory to the supposedly pure values of Minimalism. The project proposes that when methodologies derived from these realities are applied to and extended within abstract geometric minimal painting it can be re-aligned *with* that everyday experience rather than being seen as aloof from it.

To achieve this a new model for abstract painting is proposed; one that recoils from simply pursuing 'more of the same'. This new model might then be seen to articulate the uncertainties that the perceived model of Minimalism excludes. This articulation relies on the new model being conversant with 'human fallibility' and the blemishes of the real world. These issues were investigated in a studio based practice which produced a large body of paintings.

The project shows that a clash of values; on the one hand the supposedly idealised and untainted, on the other the scuffed corners and uncertainties of the real world, positioned in the one body of work, yields a very different kind of abstraction from that handed down from the mid 60's. It is a kind of abstraction which acknowledges and accepts its place within a world of other things; that is not divorced from that world. It finds affinity with an imperfect world of blemishes and mistakes whilst maintaining that within all of this there is still room for the blank space of abstraction.

Ultimately the conclusion of this project, if it is to challenge the view of Minimalism as sealed within its own pristine constructions, must remain open. Its proposal is to open up a model of geometric abstraction which has come to be seen, rightly or wrongly, as closed and impervious. The project necessarily raises doubts but it does so by proposing that such is life, and that there is room for a kind of geometric abstract painting that finds itself at home here.

Acknowledgements

Thankyou to Paul Zika and Rosalind Walker

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PART ONE: THE CENTRAL ARGUMENT

INTRODUCTION: THE ANECDOTAL GRID

The following introduction relates to an encounter with a grid used as a device within a painting which was to colour the way that I saw this formal structure subsequently. Whilst this account is undoubtedly subjective it nonetheless serves to introduce a certain attitude which pervades this project. At the very least it may open up the question of what differences exist between a 'humanised' grid (one that extends itself into the world of real things) and the grid as an ideal; self contained and pristine.

Twelve years ago, as an undergraduate student, I came across a grid in a painting which was different from those I had seen in abstract geometric painting. In this case the grid was *around* a painting in a reproduction of a work by François Boucher – *Landscape in Arabesque Framing*.

1. François Boucher, *Landscape in Arabesque Framing*, 174-?

At that time what most interested me was the arabesque frame, painted around the landscape. Part of this frame is made up of a latticed trellis, such as one would find in a garden arbour, which curves and loops its way around the central idyllic pastoral scene. The lattice only forms a small part (approximately one quarter) of this framing and it would be easy to pass over it in favour of other, more dominant features in the painting. However, at the same time as encountering this image I

was reading 'The Flounder' by Günter Grass in which he writes about one possible use of a latticework garden arbour:

"...no need to travel. We can stay right here and bring the whole world into our Arbour and think it over thoroughly."[1]

Grass further implies that the Arbour might be seen as a form of sanctuary from which the world might be contemplated:

"[...]a gourd-vine arbour, though [...] it doesn't amount to much, is nevertheless a fit place to see the world as a whole with all its changing horrors."[2]

The grid-like trellis from Boucher's painting of arabesque framing, forming as it does a protective boundary around the idyllic image, became in my mind linked to the trellis that made up Grass' sanctuary. It was as much a place for reflection upon the world *outside* the grid as it was a device to *contain* the world. However, the lattice in Boucher's painting frames the central idyllic image and at the same time opens it up, breaching the divide that separates the viewer from the ideal – vines and creepers can be seen growing out of the pastoral scene, across the frame and into 'real' space.

2. Boucher, detail

In many ways this flies in the face of the grid as a rigorously *formal* device, but perhaps what may linger from this initial encounter with the grid is the implication that its perfection is a fragile one (Grass' arbour is ultimately a flimsy construct) and its status as both *the* icon and the ideal of Modernism and subsequently Minimalism is questionable. It doesn't take much to break a garden trellis.

THE CENTRAL ARGUMENT

The argument of this project is that if abstract geometric painting, which finds a precedence in Minimal art, is to be presented as open and *less idealised*, it must find a vehicle which is more inclusive than it is

exclusive; it must recognise more human contingencies and fallibilities rather than divorcing itself from these.

This project proposes to explore abstract geometric painting in light of the prevalent understanding of the conditions for Minimal art. The widely held view of this form of 'reductive' art can be typified by descriptions such as: "starkly austere, monochromatic, abstract"[3] ; or "inorganic", "impersonal", "machined"[4]. Others maintain that "minimalism captures pure forms, maps logical structures, or depicts abstract thought"[5] or that it is "circular and pedantic, mechanically self-referential and authoritarian"[6]. Most accounts will acknowledge a reading of Minimalism as aloof from everyday life.

The definition of Minimal art is flexible. However, there is a consensus of opinion on what the style or 'look' of 'Minimalism' is. The generic model - whatever is brought to mind by the term 'Minimal art' - can be thought of as a kind of ideal. It is often very different from the specific realities of either individual artworks or the ideas about that work that any of the original Minimalists had. In its abstract sense the term Minimalism avoids the problematic nature of widely differing accounts in favour of the generalised. It offers a face value of Minimalism. This ideal model is subject to change (in its interpretation and in its persistent revisiting by artists) but importantly for this project there are characteristics which remain consistently the same. These characteristics are often adapted by artists, in different ways and for very different purposes.[7] This project identifies a number of characteristics and conditions which contribute to the recognition of Minimal art. Example artworks by the originators of Minimalism, which illustrate each particular characteristic, are looked at in Part Two. It is crucial to the argument of this project that the point is made that what is being taken from Minimalism is exactly this face value, the *superficial ideal.* It uses the syntax of Minimalism without regard for the social or cultural context that, in the first instance, gave rise to it. It is not within the scope of this project to propose yet another interpretation of those originating conditions. The project also argues that it is this syntax which needs to be challenged and that by inserting new vocabulary a different meaning will result.

The project investigates ways of challenging the Minimal look and importantly the perception of that look. This strategy raises questions which must be addressed. Specifically for this project these questions are:

- How can painting use the accepted model of Minimalism?

- Is it possible to use this ideal in conjunction with a methodology which recognises the fallibilities, flaws and contingent aspects attributed to everyday experience?

- Is it still possible to retain the blank space of abstraction in a kind of geometric abstract painting that seeks to question the ideal with strategies derived from the contingencies of quotidian experience?

- Is it an effective strategy to reposition Minimal values as uncertain and indeterminate in answering the above questions?

It is proposed that the combined use of these contradictory elements: the Minimal ideal as pristine and certain, and the uncertainties of the contingent, creates a different kind of abstraction which, whilst it compromises the idealised world of Minimalism, re-positions the same within the real world, finding correspondence between the utilitarian nature of its materials, and the worn, blemished and flawed outcomes resulting from actual use - the wear and tear of use. In specific terms the project consistently investigates methodologies which seek to undermine the accepted values of the Minimal precedent, not so as to supersede it entirely but to question its perceived certainties. In so doing, the project argues that this new model will be seen as having affinity with the world around us as much as it does with the world *contained* within Minimalism.

The methodologies were developed in the studio over a period of twenty-four months. These methodologies take their lead from conditions and values which are outlined in Part Two. Firstly, the Minimal 'look' had to be cited and this is done by referring to key works by Carl Andre, Donald Judd, Dan Flavin and Sol LeWitt. The implication is, that if one were to apply the conditions and values that came to be seen subsequently in these artworks, one would produce more Minimal art. A set of characteristics is taken which clearly establish this precedent. Secondly, the methodologies - in keeping with the parameters of this project - had to find ways of arriving at a different conclusion. Not simply more Minimalism. Assuming that if the correct application of the Minimal conditions produces more Minimal art then the *misapplication* of the same will achieve a different outcome.

To this end various ways of misusing these conditions are investigated. For example if a hard, gloss enamel paint surface could be called Minimal the methodology of misuse suggests a scuffing, wearing down or sanding of that surface (not just the application of flat paint which is something else). Several ways of then foregrounding the evidence of that scuffing or stripping are investigated in the project - but always in opposition to the gloss surface. If the ideal grid is straight, flat, uniform and contained within its own proportions then misapplying it would result in a twisted, irregular and ill-fitting version. If the correct application of a rigid system allows no flaws, mistakes or inconsistencies then the misapplication would result in all of these being present.

These and other strategies are described in more detail in the third part of this paper. The guiding principle of this strategy is one of opposition or contradiction.

This re-positioning opens up a reading of Minimalism that effectively challenges its status as certain, determined and closed. One of the issues that arises with the application of the strategies outlined above is that they potentially lead to something which is not Minimalism. And yet, given the inherent difficulties in defining exactly

what Minimalism is, this hardly seems to be important. In any case, one of the points of this project is that it takes a schematic view of Minimalism (as it is seen nowadays) as a starting point from which to develop a new model. The model put forward in this project clearly stakes a claim within the historical precedent but its significance lies in the challenges it makes to that precedent, proposing that in doing this a new relevance will be found.

Whilst the project uses one kind of schematic generalisation it does so within a field that also contains its own generalisations. Painting, as an abstract, comes with a precondition: 'painting is dead'.[8] Or once was, and is back again. For all the lamenting, there have been a great many survey exhibitions over the past decade or so that deal with painting, and most essays on the subject make mention of this ongoing condition. For example, in the opening essay of the catalogue that accompanied the exhibition 'Painting at the Edge of the World' Douglas Fogle writes:

"We, too, try to bury our body - the body of painting - over and over again. And while at times the heralding of these deaths seems downright apocalyptic ("Really, this is the end ... seriously"), in the end it all seems much more like a nuisance than like an aesthetic *Götterdämmerung*. Though collectively troubled by painting's status, we barely flinch when it miraculously rises from the dead again and again. This continual death and rebirth of painting, what we might call its Lazarus effect, has become a common feature of the artistic landscape over the past 200 years."[9]

The explanations of why painting is so persistent in its resurrection are many and varied but most would agree that it is an ability for re-invention that keeps it going. One of the manifestations of this process is the painting 'hybrid', a notion that David Ryan explores in the essay that accompanied a recent exhibition of paintings at the Tate Liverpool:

"If the hybrid essentially cuts across, or combines, different species or varieties, then perhaps the collapse of the artificial separation and critical polarization - within the last few decades of the 20th century - of Matisse and Duchamp takes on a new urgency for painting and its relation to the everyday. If the possibility of thinking across these two positions is rather like an oxymoron, then it is one that provides the fuel to explore fresh terrain. [...] If a model of abstraction is relevant [...] then it is one that no longer 'turns away' from the world but is active in its intensification; it favours connections and hybrid articulations."[10]

It is in this sense, as a 'hybrid', that this research project contributes to the field of painting (subheading 'Minimalism'). Its relevance lies in the new model that it suggests for abstract painting, its attachment to both Minimalism and to the everyday and consequently suggests that painting is still full of possibility and that its continual re-invention can be achieved by an opening up of its perceived archetypes.

3. Neil Haddon, *Patch No.1 & 3,* 2001, detail

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[1] Günter Grass, *The Flounder,* London: Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1978,p.93
[2] ibid. p.93
[3] David Batchelor, *Minimalism,* London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997, p.7
[4] Robert Hughes, in conversation *American Visions: The Age of Anxiety*, BBC Training Videos, 1996
[5] Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real,* MIT Press, 1996, p.40
[6] Suzi Gablik paraphrasing Donald Kuspit, 'Minimalism' in *Concepts of Modern art,* London: Thames and Hudson, 1985, p.248
[7] Hal Foster elaborates this in his discussion of the ongoing relevance of Minimalism attributing its intended use to various different revisions adding that "even as minimalism became a set style long ago, its value is still not set, and this is further evidence of its crucial status in postwar art." in *The Return of the Real, The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century,* Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press, 1996.
David Batchelor also draws out this point in relation to the work of Damien Hirst, implying that the 'look' of Minimalism is as much a starting point as it is something awaiting yet another re-interpretation:
"Hirst takes the format of the Minimalist open box, or shallow tray, or modular cube and inserts a kind of human or at least a bodily content into it. Minimalist form serves these artists as a frame or a grammar through which contemporary subjects may be articulated as art. Hirst comes up with a striking balancing act: the readymade or found object is provided with a frame of reference, while the 'empty' Minimalist box is simultaneously supplied with a content." *Minimalism,* London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997, p.75
[8] see for example: 'Painting: the Task of Mourning' by Yve-Alain Bois reprinted in Benjamin, Andrew & Osborne, Peter, *Thinking Art: Beyond Traditional Aesthetics,* London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1991
[9] Douglas Fogle, 'The Trouble with Painting' in *Painting at the Edge of the World,* Minneapolis: Walker Art Center Publications, 2001, p.14
[10] David Ryan, *Hybrids,* London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 2001, p.17

PART TWO: CONTEXTS

INTRODUCTION

This section falls into three categories. Firstly there will be a discussion of key artists associated with Minimalism and how perceptions of their work have contributed to an understanding of it as a style. Some of the more recognisable characteristics of the Minimal 'look' which are used in this project will be identified. The second category includes the work of three artists who help establish a context in terms of contemporary attitudes to the use of historical models and precedents. Thirdly there is discussion of a more generalised context that raises theoretical positions that have a bearing on this project.

WHAT MINIMALISM LOOKS LIKE

In his book *Minimalism*[1] David Batchelor opens with " There is a problem with Minimalism. It never existed." This paradox immediately raises two very important points. Firstly, the thing that we call Minimalism was not proposed by a clearly defined group of artists that came together to declare their manifesto of ideas. Secondly, the suggestion is that the 'look' that we now know as Minimal is not historically accurate. The problem as Batchelor points out is illustrated by two facts. On the one hand many of the artists that we now would call Minimalists never wanted that 'tag.'[2] On the other is that: "if Richard Wollheim's essay 'Minimal Art', published in early 1965, really did christen the movement whose existence is denied by the artists associated with it, then it is a fitting irony, for Wollheim's text discusses none of the artists whose work subsequently came to be branded 'Minimal'.[3]

It is not the purpose of this project to establish what would be an historically accurate definition of Minimalism. Nor is it to look in depth at the work of individual artists in an attempt to understand the movement within the context of its own time. However, the project does rely on what we call a style or look, a commonly held idea about what can be called Minimal. It is important that an account is given of what this look is or how it is most often described. It will also be necessary to illustrate this with the work of some of the Minimalist artists. Again the thrust of this project is not to elucidate Minimalism in order to arrive at a better or more 'correct' understanding of this movement but to use its *face value* for ulterior motives.

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[1] David Batchelor, *Minimalism,* London: Tate Gallery Publishing p.6

[2] Batchelor quotes Dan Flavin from 1967 - "I find the invitation to participate in your untitled 'minimal art' exhibition objectionable. I do not enjoy the designation of my proposal as that of some dubious, facetious, epithetical, proto-historic 'movement', ibid, p.6

[3] ibid, p.6

Who are the Minimalists? To answer this question this project relies on what has become the most widely held view of who these artists are. Most accounts of Minimalism (as an art movement) start with a list. With the exception of one or two names that are dropped in or out depending on the writer (and bypassing Wollhiem's) this list would be: Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, and Robert Morris. For the purposes of this project, it will be these artists whom I draw on to give examples of the visual aspects and strategies that are used in the realisation of the work and its proposals. The point of this is not to investigate the work of these artists under its own terms but to *illustrate* some of the key areas that have contributed to an understanding of the adjective 'Minimal'.

GRIDS, MONOCHROMES, INDUSTRIAL MATERIALS AND SYSTEMS

There are a lot of grids in Minimal art. I will focus on one in particular as representative of the many others, *144 Magnesium Square,* 1969 by Carl Andre.

I first encountered this work in the exhibition 'American Art in the 20th Century' at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 1985. I walked into a room and accidentally onto the art. The gallery attendant reassured me that I had done nothing wrong, that it was alright to do that. My experience of this work concurs with the common observation of these floor pieces that they are often indistinguishable from the actual floor. (I do not know if you would still be allowed to walk on the art. Probably not.)

4. Carl Andre, *144 Magnesium Square,* 1969

144 Magnesium Square is a grid. It is made up of one hundred and forty-four square panels that each measure twelve inches by twelve inches. The panels are laid on the floor in a square. The title of the work describes both the number of units within the larger square and also the

overall dimensions. Something is lost when the dimensions are given in centimetres - 365.8 x 365.8. The symmetry does not seem quite the same, there is no relationship between the overall dimensions and the dimensions of each unit. (In some ways, measured in centimetres *144 Magnesium Square* fits rather well into this project.)

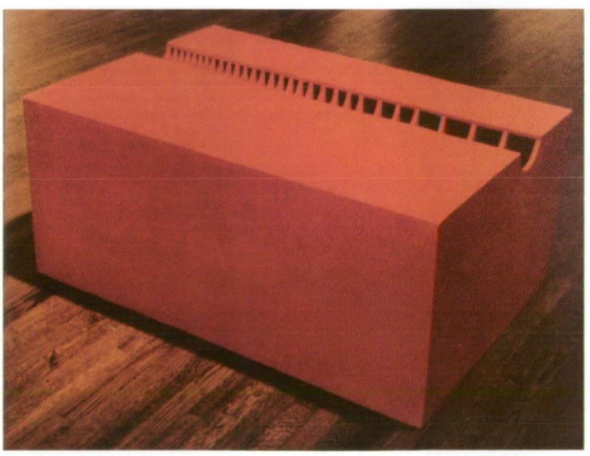
The grid (in inches) is a perfect one. That is, the horizontal and vertical axis formed by the edges of each unit fit proportionally within the edges of the square. They are neatly contained within it. There are no overlaps or loose ends. No flaws.[4]

Suzi Gablik writes that the "self-sufficient language of the [Minimalist] grid - with its indifference to moral, social and philosophical values, its preoccupation with worlds comparable to those the mathematician calls forth when he plays with axioms [...] its meaning hemmed in by a network of set forms - remains as nothing less than a kind of Rosetta stone of our age."[5]

In other words the notion that an art which can maintain this indifference is a hallmark of Minimalism which dates it precisely. It is also a notion that this project challenges directly. Indifference is both outdated and indeed, no longer desirable.

Since it was first put together in 1969 the magnesium has tarnished. It shows its age. But its form remains resolutely, uncompromisingly the same. And although grids appear in many other forms of art **it is the *static* nature of the grid that I would identify as one of the most recognisable characteristics of its use in Minimal art.**

Another way in which Andre's work contributes to a perception of Minimalism is as a monochrome. The fact that all of his sculpture uses material in its 'raw' unpainted state means that it is largely monochromatic. This monochromatic value is not necessarily one that has been achieved - it is a by-product of the material. Donald Judd however, did not initially leave his objects unpainted.



5. Donald Judd, ***untitled,*** 1963

[4] The use of bold type here indicates the key Minimalist characteristics identified in this project

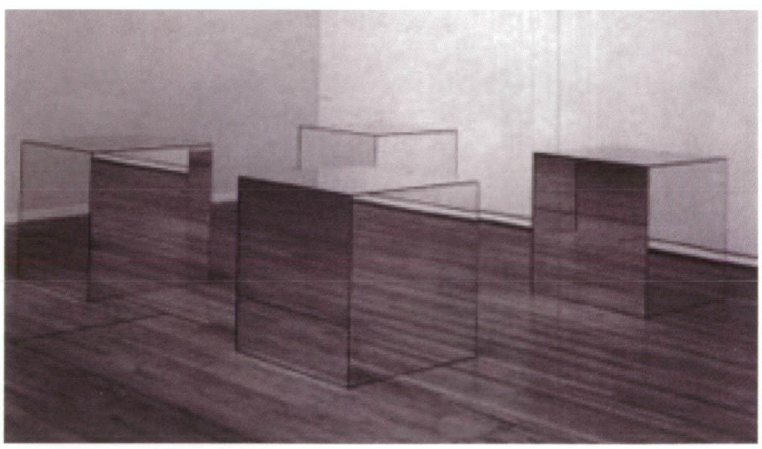
[5] Suzi Gablik, 'Minimalism' in *Concepts of Modern Art,* London: Thames and Hudson, p. 253

For a period in the early 1960's he used cadmium red light almost exclusively (just as Robert Morris initially used a uniform neutral grey paint for his objects).

Briony Fer writes that in these works of Judd " the series is levelled out, [to] an ordering system without apparent hierarchy. The monochrome, in these terms [...] shifts the emphasis to a different mode of looking, away from discriminating subtle effects, that puts pressure on the spectator to see the object as a single unity, as just 'one thing'."[6]

It is possible to extend these ideas into Judd's later work in which he does use more than one colour. Although there is clearly more than one colour in *Untitled (DJ 89-20)*, 1989 some of the values attributed to the monochrome still linger. Each part of this work has a colour (red, yellow, white or black) but in every other respect is seen to be the same. One of Judd's concerns was that the works should contain no hierarchical values, that one part should follow on from the other with none taking precedence. The colours although different seem to cancel each other out. **They are equivalent and intended to be taken in as one. In this way this work could perhaps be seen to have a monochromatic value.**

" Although recently the idea has gained ground that Judd's work exemplifies the aggressive and 'masculine' hard surfaces of Minimalism, curiously enough Judd's materials, though mass-produced, are typically materials such as plexiglass, which will not bear the touch of human hands. Unlike bronze or other more conventional sculptural materials, they betray any mark or touch; that is the cost of the pristine effect; in consequence, the requirement is the injunction on touch."[7]



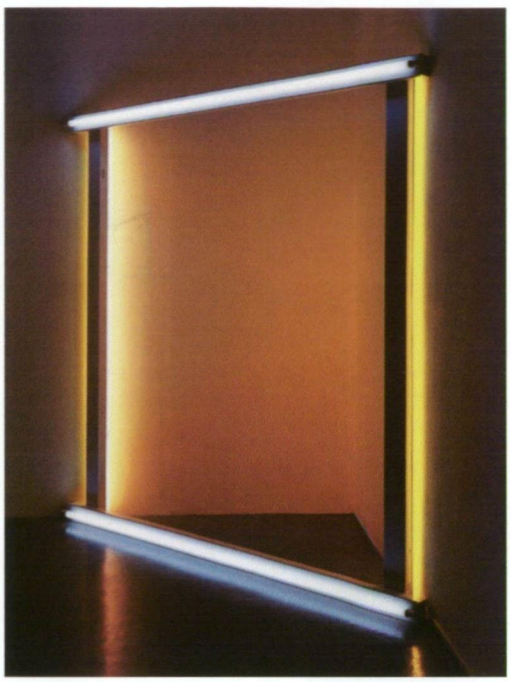
6. Robert Morris, ***untitled,*** 1965 / 71

Another value commonly attributed to Minimalism is the use of industrial materials. The materials used are, by and large, mass-produced and ordered from the factory. Fer's point above is an interesting comment on the consequences of the use of this material. It seems almost ironic that materials intended to be used within the

[6] Briony Fer, *On Abstract Art,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997, p.139
[7] Fer, op. cit. p.151

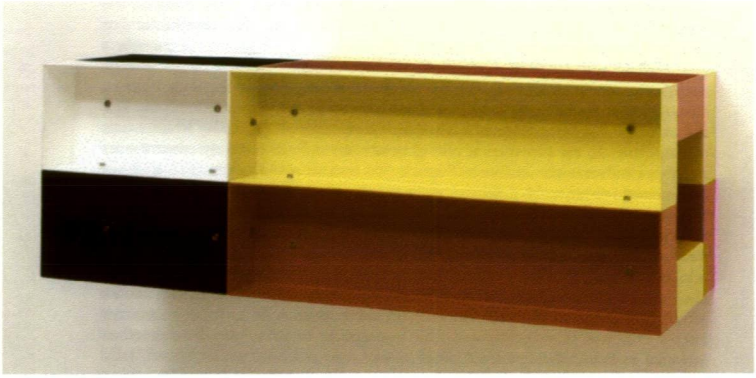
rigours of the urban context when used as art cannot sustain any of the contingencies of that context

It is possible to look at almost any other work of the artists listed above, from Robert Morris's 'mirror cubes' to Flavin's fluorescent lights and find industrial materials. And although there are notable exceptions, **the perception is that these materials are 'left' in their pristine state or that the artwork's face value is pristine.**



7. Dan Flavin, *untitled (to the 'innovator' of Wheeling Peachblow),* 1968

Whilst I would argue that the 'injunction on touch' can be applied to most art it would also be true that this quality is foregrounded in the work of the Minimalists and contributes to the perception of Minimalism as 'aloof.' One encounter that I had with Judd's work bears out this insistence on the avoidance of touch. A small dealership in London just after Judd's death had hurriedly hung some of the same series as the work cited previously. Either the wall on which the work had been hung was irregular or there had been problems aligning the works because they were clearly askew. The impact on perception of these pieces was enormous. The tension of the 'injunction' on touch had been displaced by a direct evidence of the same, unintentionally re-positioning this tension with the anxiety that the piece *had been touched.*



8. Donald Judd, *untitled (DJ 89 – 20)*, 1989

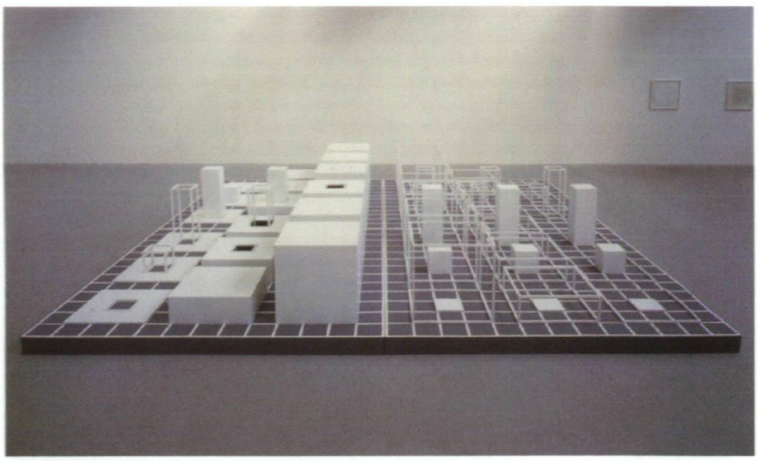
In 1966 Lawrence Alloway wrote in the catalogue essay to the exhibition 'Systemic Painting' that a "system is not antithetical to the values suggested by such art world word-clusters as humanist, organic, and process. On the contrary, while the artist is engaged with it, a system is a process; trial and error, instead of being incorporated in the painting, occur off the canvas."[8]

And yet none of this "trial and error" is visible to the viewer. Alloway seems to be suggesting that criticism of a *mathematical* procedure in making art is invalid because at some point in that process there was speculation and uncertainty. But if the perception of the finished work is contrary to this, does the trial and error really have any significance?

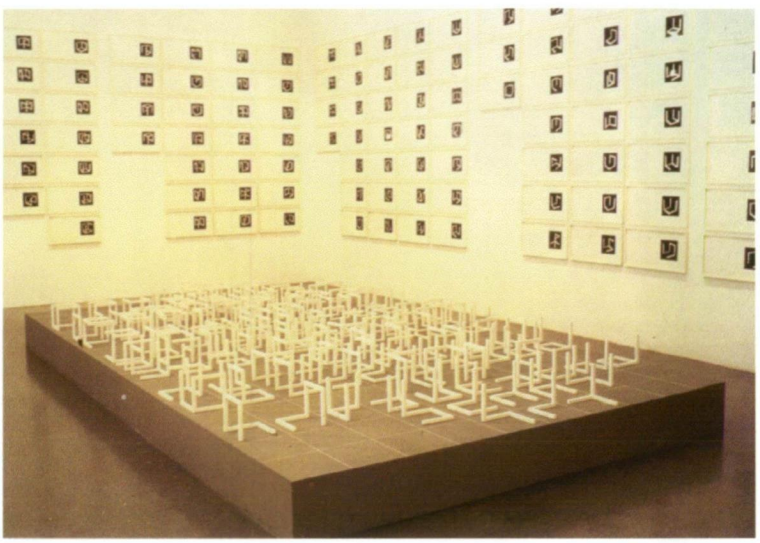
The use of a system, either in the production of the artwork or solely in appearance, can be seen in many of the Minimalists' work. Whilst Judd's 'one thing after another' is a system of sorts that led to very clear contained results, Sol LeWitt's systems lead to work that is perceived in a very different way. The systems that he employs are easily stated and relatively simple. But the perception of the work made as a result of following the system is not so simple. As David Batchelor points out when writing about the work *Serial Project 1,* 1966 - "What is striking in many cases is the level of perceptual complexity which arises out of a simple set of rules. Shadows cast by one bar over another in a modular open cube soften and scramble the work's strict geometry. [...] To conceive the work and to see it are two quite different things".[9]

[8] Laurence Alloway, 'Systemic Painting' in *Minimal Art*, Gregory Battcock (ed.), New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1968, p.58

[9] Batchelor, op. cit. p.48



9. Sol LeWitt, *Serial Project 1 (A,B,C,D)*, 1966



10. Sol LeWitt, *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes*, 1974

Whilst the visual complexity is evident there is nonetheless the requirement that, in the viewer's mind the works are understood to follow a logical progression, and that they are 'whole' only in that they exhaust a predetermined system of alternatives."[10] That is, for the work to be completed the system must be seen and understood to have been rigorously followed. **It is this rigid application of the system that I would include as another of the 'trademarks' of Minimalism.**

These are some of the more recognisable characteristics of Minimal art: the grid, the use of pristine industrial materials, the employment or evocation of systems for making and the presence of a monochromatic value. Given the nature of the discussion surrounding Minimalism this list is clearly a simplistic one. However it does serve to indicate the schematic nature of the 'class name' both in the way it is used to describe artworks and, importantly for this project, in the way it forms one possible framework that can subsequently be built upon in

[10] ibid. p.47

the production of new work. These characteristics are used in this project in such a way as to question the values commonly attributed to them to arrive at a different model for abstract painting. These characteristics, identified in the work of the originating Minimal artists, have been widely used in many forms of art – not just in more of the 'specific objects' of Minimalism, such was the impact of this movement. The artists mentioned in the next section have all worked with an historical precedent in one way or another – all, at some point, have made work in which the Minimalist characteristics can be found.

GERHARD RICHTER, SARAH MORRIS AND GARY HUME

"The gap that exists in painting – bridging meaning between idea and image, subject and content – also characterises what for, Giles Deleuze, is a difference between Modernity and Postmodernity. For him, contemporary thought should no longer be 'a question of starting or finishing,' but it should rather be concerned with 'what happens "in between"'. However, although such a distinction does not actually invalidate the Modernist historicising and essential structure, it suggests another way in which it acts. The painting that could be purely painting has remained perpetually out of reach. Painting, here, will always be in a state of 'what happens "in between"'. It constructs a language that takes its place within the topology of the present cultural landscape, acknowledges a past that can never be unlearnt, whilst aiming at a future that will always move away from us as we move towards it."[11]

This section deals with Sarah Morris, Gerhard Richter and Gary Hume. All three are different, not just in terms of age and nationality but also in terms of the work that they produce. The reasons for their inclusion here is twofold: they are representative, not so much in terms of style or affiliation to a movement, but of certain attitudes prevalent in the work of artists who, in one regard or another revisit a prior model or accept the uncertainties inherent in looking back into history. By referring to the work of each, points will be drawn out which are used in conjunction with more general comment in the central argument and previously on Minimalism to establish a context for this project.

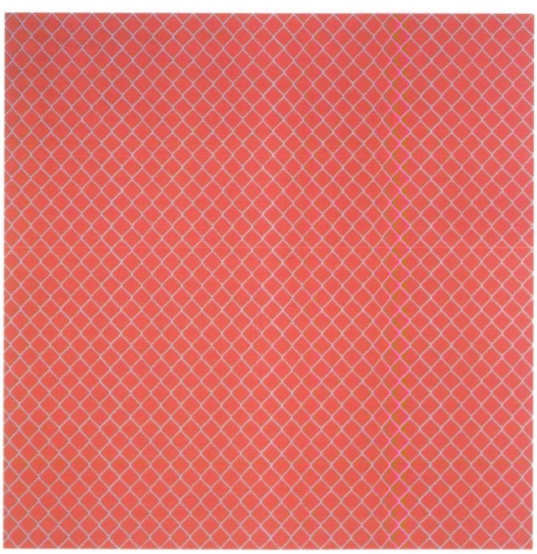
I am not sure what order I should put these artists in. Whether it be historical (that is how old they are) or when I first encountered their work. Of all the artists about whom I could write I have decided to stay with those whose work I have seen first hand. It seems important that I start here on the surface of things. But still, what order? There have been key moments when the encounter with an artwork has altered the way I have contextualised and made my own work and I will use these moments. At least start with them, the rest will be partial - reproductions of artworks, information gathered from books and magazines and so on. These artists are dealt with on their own terms and not necessarily as part of any one movement although each may

[11] Andrew Wilson quoting Giles Deleuze in *From Here*, Waddington Galleries/ Karsten Schubert, London 1995 p14

well have importance within a larger grouping. Each of these artists in some way acknowledges a prior art- historical model and attempts to promote this model as a way of mediating contemporary experience. However it is not that they are simply re-doing Abstract Expressionism or Pop Art or Minimalism but that **each establishes an attitude that questions the assumptions of these models by introducing a note of fallibility and yet at the same time manages to suggest that it is through the examination of these flaws that an alternative model for abstract geometric painting and its relationship to contemporary experience can be arrived at.**

SARAH MORRIS
Dumbpop, Jerwood Gallery, The Jerwood Foundation London, 1998

Surface. Absolutely sealed, one surface – no breaches. They are extremely glossy. High gloss enamel paint on canvas. They reflect rather than absorb. The paintings are on canvas and the weave of the cloth is just apparent beneath the enamel paint meaning that the surfaces are not quite mirror like in the way they reflect. They are slightly diffuse. The paint application is tightly controlled, the surface slick. The edges within the paintings whether they form a word, number or grid have been masked and are perfectly clean – no bleeding, no drips. The colours seem to be straight off the hardware store colour chart but are more industrial than domestic. Morris uses computers heavily in both the design and production of her paintings. There is no trace of a 'hand-drawn' quality.



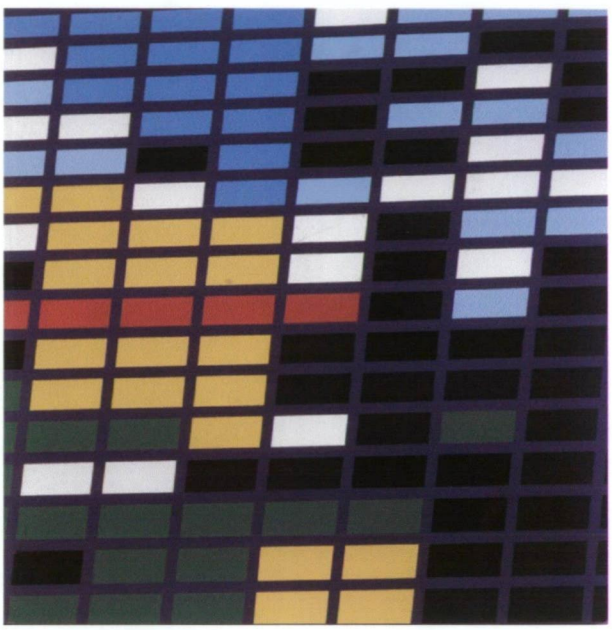
11. Sarah Morris, *Aluminium Fence,* 1997

Aluminium Fence (1997) is a good example of the control that Morris has over the *finish* of her work. There are no fluctuations across the surface of the painting. Apart from the crisp edge, a slight raised surface

left by the masking process the surface is very nearly seamless. So what of this surface then? To what does this seamless control refer?

'Through the shiny surfaces of the glossy enamel house-paint used in the *Midtown* series which, in their regularity suggest no depth whatsoever and thus, as a medium, is analogous to the mirror-like surfaces of the buildings themselves.'[12]

The buildings that Jan Winkelmann mentions here are the skyscrapers, hotels and corporate headquarters common to most major industrialised cities and specifically in Morris' case the buildings of New York and London.



12. Sarah Morris, *Midtown – Conde Nast,* 1999

Put simply Morris has taken images of the facades of buildings and then put those images through a process of simplification to reduce them to line and colour in the form of a grid. The buildings that Morris chooses are specific. They all have a certain look to them. As David Ryan suggests, these paintings encapsulate ' a basic coding of modernism in terms of the grid or the systemically articulated field... the paintings imitate a kind of 60's or 70's atmosphere or mood.'[13] This 'basic coding' relies on generic archetypes to clearly indicate to the viewer the 'look' that Morris wants us to get. The kind of corporate architecture that she uses is familiar to most and by extension, we are referred to some of the values that gave rise to that architecture. As Morris puts it:

[12] Jan Winkelmann, 'Semiotics of Surface' in *Modern Worlds,* MOMA Oxford, 1999, unpaginated

[13] David Ryan, *Hybrids,* London: Tate Gallery Publishers, 2001, p15

" I'm more interested in the corporate hotel designs than Le Corbusier although you can't get one without the other."[14]

But then what we get is in fact a partial view of those larger concerns. Morris is aware that she can *use* a look, 'atmosphere or mood' to position the viewer within a certain field of concerns even with this heavily cropped or simplified view. These concerns relate to the need to find new strategies to depict the realities of living within the modern urban context rather than the idealism of high modernism.

"I refuse to include elements in the work that don't already exist around me, yet I crop and compile a fragmented view of the urban world. Not the aesthetic of high modernism but the fragmentary experience that results from urban sprawl and megastructures."[15]

In a sense, Morris uses these archetypal grids because of their loaded meaning but the paintings nonetheless remain 'flexible'. That is, as a result of this cropping and fragmentation[16] they remain available to be filled with other content. Morris is insistent that this is up to the viewer to provide but given the strong indicators that content has to operate within quite rigid confines. As she says:

"This approach alongside the use of fragmentary images creates a space between the viewer and the work that you can fill with your own content. But the paintings only succeed when shattered starting points are worked into a unified artwork. I try to create a new language of iconic images derived from glimpses of contemporary experience."[17]

The invitation to go beyond a simple recognition of the archetype (that is, the ideal grid) is provided by the awkward angles at which these grids are set. Rather than leaving the reference quite literally at face value (as in a front-on view) it is made strange, the view a disconcerting one. The momentary comfort of recognising the archetype is withdrawn, thus providing the necessary flexible space. Without this strangeness the perfection of the surface, its gloss paint hardness coupled with the rigorous grid would allow little room for manoeuvre.

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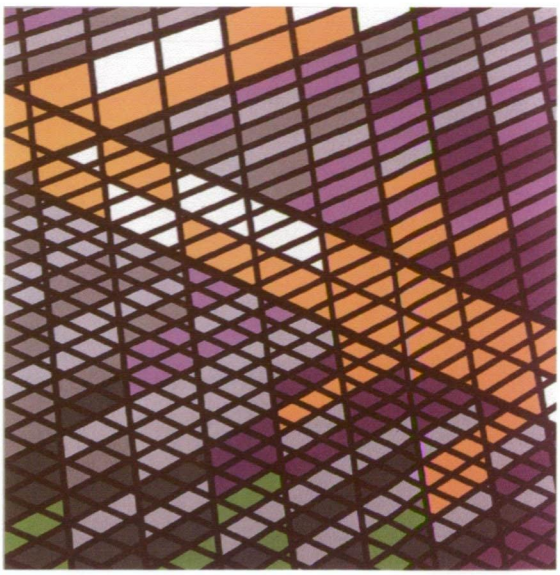
[14] Sarah Morris interviewed by Michael Tarantino and Rob Bowman in *Modern Worlds*, MOMA Oxford, 1999, unpaginated.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Whilst I have chosen to focus on Morris' use of the grid as found on building facades it is important to point out that she has been wide ranging in her selection of 'fragments'. Nonetheless all of these fragments whether they are words plucked from newspaper headlines or faces from glossy magazines in some way are iconic. They have also been a series of paintings that depict the kind of wallpaper or tiling found in slightly downmarket motels and although they too employ the perspectival device of the corporate headquarter paintings they seem to have a nostalgic feel to them.
[17] Ibid.



13. Sarah Morris, *The Mirage (Las Vegas)*, 1999

It is this device, used by Morris to encourage uncertainty that is of interest. Whilst, as Morris suggests, she uses a 'fragment' of a grid found on a building façade, the work in this project uses grids which do not fit within the confines of the support upon which they sit. Whether or not this then makes them 'fragments' is debatable. These grids are essentially abstract in nature; that is, taken from a notion of a perfect grid, the ideal grid. It is this notion of the iconic grid derived from the ideal rather than the specific urban manifestation of it that I draw upon in this project. And yet whilst this might be different from Morris approach, her use of the iconic mediated through fragmentation to arrive essentially at an indeterminate core has a resonance in my own project.

Michael Bracewell has written of Morris' work that it employs "the blank aesthetic of Pop, overlaid by a systems based aesthetic grid which is capable of accessing the mass of new urban information and that "throughout the fall-out of post-modernism, in a culture concerned with the distancing of certainty, the geometry of repetition as medium and metaphor – has lent itself to the tasks of commentary." [18] Ultimately the concern is that by mediating the fragmentary experience of the contemporary urban context one can offer a way of negotiating that experience and that it might be possibly to offer some other space within that mediation.

[18] Michael Bracewell 'A Cultural Context for Sarah Morris in *Modern Worlds*, MOMA Oxford 1999, unpaginated

GERHARD RICHTER
'The London Paintings', Anthony D'Offay Gallery, London 1988
'The Oktober Cycle', ICA, London 1989

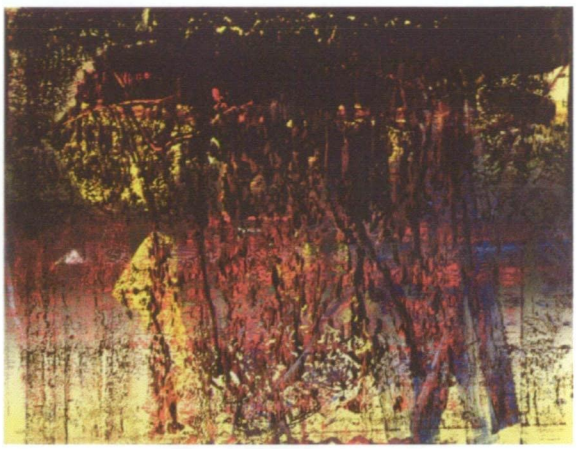
'These pictures always seem to take us as viewers out of ourselves, and at the same time they bring us up short – speculations and all – at the edge of the image. They answer none of the questions that they pose. I've never come across anything like this before; a picture that almost systematically jams its own signal, shoves the viewer away, and forces him to come back for more, only to start the whole thing over again. Sometimes I have the feeling that these are brazen oversimplifications. But in the end I feel that the success lies in the simplification.'[19]

Jan Thorn Prikker wrote this about Richter's 'Oktober Cycle' of paintings but it quite well describes my first encounter with Richter's work one year prior to seeing these particular paintings – a 'jammed' signal. *St. Andrew,* 1988 seemed to me to have two signals, one jamming the other. The initial feeling that this painting must surely be expressive (Abstract Expressive), after all there was so much flickering colour, so much paint, so much 'happening' quickly gave way, on closer inspection, to the realisation that this was all merely a by-product of an incredibly simple system - dragged paint. It was all reduced to chance but chance only as a result of a very singular and repeated action. Somehow the two readings seemed to cancel each other out. It is possible to say that *St. Andrew* is a largely red/orange painting and yet close up the huge array of colours, was garish - straight out of the tube. The detail contradicted the whole.

14. Gerhard Richter, *St. Andrew,* 1988

[19] Jan Thorn Prikker in conversation with Gerhard Richter in *Gerhard Richter: The Daily Practice of Painting,* London, Thames and Hudson in association with Anthony D'Offay Gallery, 1995, p.197

There is evidence in this and other works of a very different kind of underpainting (clearly seen in *St. James,* 1988). At some point there had been a smoothly rendered blending of areas of colour which was then *defaced* by the subsequent layering of dragged paint.



15. Gerhard Richter, *St. James,* 1988

16. Gerhard Richter, *Red (821),* 1994

As I have mentioned, there is a lot of colour in these and subsequent paintings. There is usually a predominance of a limited number of colours (in the final layer) so much so that it is almost possible to see these paintings as a kind of monochrome. This is a point that Briony Fer brings up when discussing a later group of paintings – the 'Red Paintings' of 1994. Fer maintains that the "all-over effect… invokes the monochrome without being one."[20] The monochrome, however had traditionally been a way of cancelling out detail. As Fer writes, " the monochrome normally has a density of surface designed to blank out precisely this kind of nuance. Instead, here the nuance blanks out the monochrome, as if the point of painting were to negate the negation."[21]

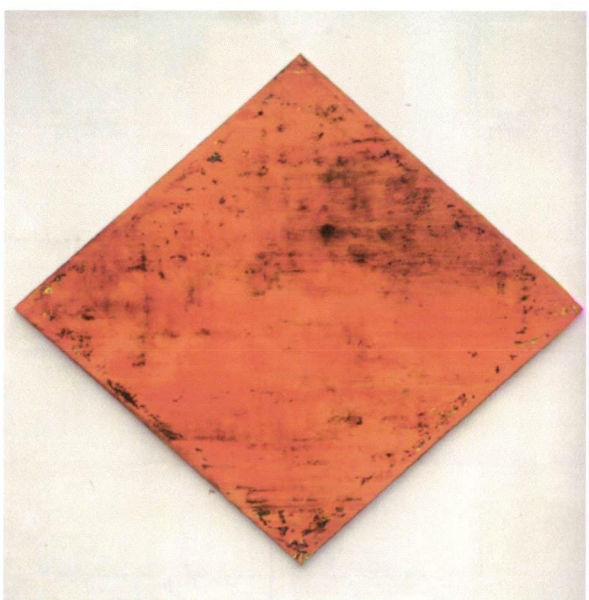
[20] Briony Fer, 'Vision and Blindness' in *On Abstract Art,* New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1997 p.155
[21] ibid. p.156

The point is that, seen in this light, Richter's paintings maintain not so much a contradiction as this double signal. On the one hand there is the invocation of the monochrome (its uniformity of surface and attendant blankness) and on the other is the highly detailed, nuanced surface, patchy and revealing a very different kind of underpainting. And it might then be possible to see Richter's abstract paintings as not fitting within any one dominant trend within abstract painting. As Fer suggests, it may 'tap the anomalies of abstraction's past, yes, but never ties up its loose ends.'[22]

This is one of the aspects of Richter's work that I draw on in my own project. That is, a view of his abstract paintings as representative of a disquiet with traditional modes of abstraction (in their black and white terms) and that seek to bridge gaps between seemingly incompatible models or at the very least question the consignment of an historical model unequivocally to the past.

Fer writes about Richter's abstract paintings and the difficulty of attributing them to these historical 'frameworks':

"I started in this book [*On Abstract Art*] by posing the problem of how we can think about works of abstract art when the ideological framework of modernism they were once seen to exemplify has become exhausted, inextricably tied to belief systems that we no longer share in important respects. Yet here we have an artist, who has done perhaps most to problematise that framework, appearing to captivate the spectator by the lure of the very same charms."[23]



17. Gerhard Richter, *AB Rhombus (821)*, 1998

In the exhibition at Anthony D'Offay gallery there were also some of Richter's paintings of landscape photographs. At the time I

[22] ibid. p.154
[23] ibid. p.156

found them baffling. It wasn't until a year later at the ICA exhibition of the 'Oktober Cycle' that the blurred or 'out of focus' finish, apparent in much of Richter's photo paintings began to make sense. If, as Fer suggested, Richter's abstract paintings invoke the monochrome whilst negating it in the detail, these paintings seem to, in a sense, do the opposite. That is to say, within the uniformity of the grey paintings, even with their subtle shifts between light and dark, these almost monochromes invoke the presence of the detail. Another way to put it is that one assumes that detail is there but that it is 'out of focus'. It is blurred. It is this obscuring of detail that Donald Kuspit reads as a distancing from that implied detail and consequently from the subject matter of the paintings; that this distancing is in fact indicative of Richter's ambivalence towards history.[24] All history is interpretation of facts that often we cannot be certain of. History is, in a sense, unknowable and Richter's 'Oktober' paintings were painted with this realisation in mind: that the inherent unknowability of all painting (ie. the *how* it does *what* it does) is in some way analogous to the unknowable dimension of history.

Kuspit maintains that Richter's 'descriptive uncertainty' indicates his concern with, on the one hand, recognising the inevitable passing of contemporary fact into history and, on the other, an attempt to arrest that process. Richter has said that doing so can "give us new insights. And it can also be the attempt to console – that is, to give a meaning. It's also about the fact that we can't simply discard and forget a story like that; we must try to find a different way of dealing with it – appropriately."[25]

18. Gerhard Richter, *Tote,* 1988

[24] Donald Kuspit, *All Our Yesterdays,* ArtForum, April 1990, pp. 129 -132
[25] Gerhard Richter in conversation with Jan Thorn Prikker, op. cit. p.194

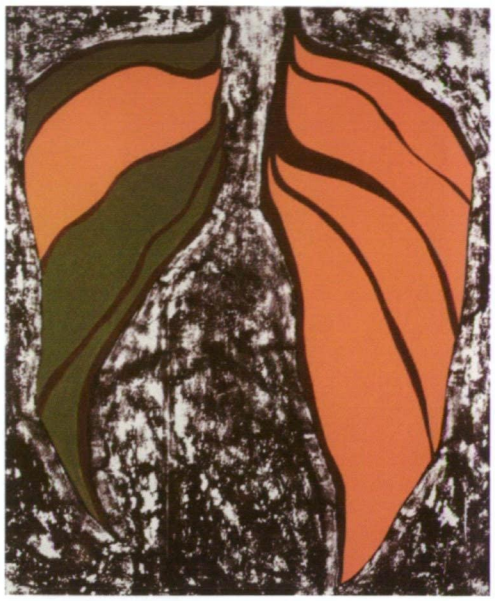
19. Gerhard Richter, *Zelle*, 1988

It is difficult to draw parallels between Richter's concern with this particular cycle of paintings, their highly emotive content and other attitudes within contemporary painting. Nonetheless, in broad strokes it might be possible to see this disquiet or uncertainty also being promoted in his abstract paintings; that it is simply not possible to reject prior models out of hand, unconditionally. In any case there have been various commentaries on the Oktober cycle that propose that these paintings are a contemporary version of History Painting. This project suggests that these two artists are not just engaged in an appropriation of these prior models but that their use of these models coupled with a particularly contemporary ambivalence that contains both disquiet and sentimental attachment are peculiarly relevant to current experience. Both artists attempt to use historical models and their lingering concerns to try to mediate contemporary experience whilst acknowledging an unease and fallibility within the existing model.

GARY HUME
Lisson Gallery, London 1993
Jay Jopling/ White Cube, London, 1995

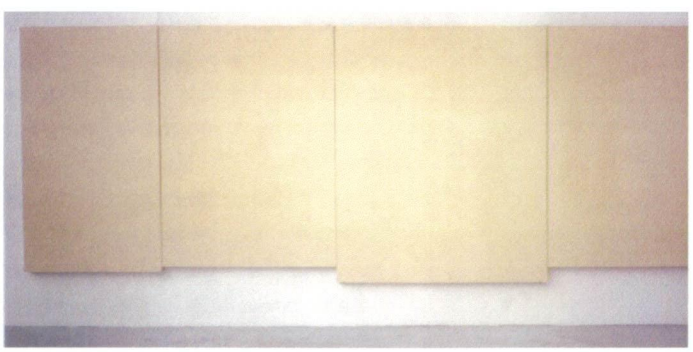
"Flat and glossy: this is one of the paradoxical attractions of commercial paints: the double quality of the dead and the dynamic, the bland and the brilliant. A shiny surface gives depth to flatness at the same time as it emphasises that flatness. But it is a kind of depth which is entirely the opposite of the atmospheric depth of traditional easel painting. This is an inexpressive, mechanical depth. It is not psychological or emotional, at least not in the traditional sense. It reflects not an imaginary inner world but an actual external space: the contingencies of the environment in which the work is situated: the

viewer's space. But it is vivid, nonetheless. It is sharp and hard and live, in a vulgar kind of way, and its vulgar sharpness is a part of its attraction."[26]



20. Gary Hume, *Roots,* 1993

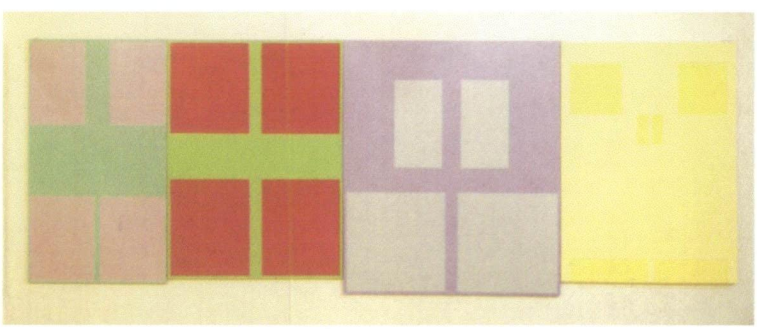
The first of Hume's figurative paintings that I saw was *Roots* (1993). I was surprised to see a painting that was not a door. And also a different kind of surface. Whereas the door paintings had all been smoothly rendered, with minimal obvious brush marks (each successive layer having been monotonously sanded to keep it as flat as possible) *Roots* was much rougher with apparent rubbed back areas and clear brushmarks. Although it was still evidently enamel paint, the hard surface had been breached. Some time later I saw several more of these newer works. These paintings seemed to reinstate the hard gloss surface of the door paintings. So much so, that in the darker areas it was possible to see the mirror like reflections of the other paintings, myself and the tiny White Cube gallery space.



21. Gary Hume, *Four Subtle Doors II,* 1989

[26] David Batchelor, 'Of Cans Corruption and Colour' in *Gary Hume,* London: The British Council/ Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2000, p.26

Prior to 1993 I had seen several of Hume's 'door paintings' in several different locations. Put briefly these paintings are door sized canvases with the door-like features that are found on doors in hospitals. They are institutional door paintings. The first of the "fifty, sixty odd" door paintings that Hume made were painted in the colours appropriate to those institutions. Later, as if Hume became bored with his stated intention to paint doors forever, other colours were introduced. Colours that had not so much to do with the colours with which the original doors were painted as with the paint itself. That is, the colours of enamel paint as found on the colour chart. Colour liberated from the door colour but still constrained by two things; firstly the available tints for enamel paint (although there may well be thousands of possible colours from these tints) and the format of the doors themselves. David Batchelor maintains that once Hume realised that there 'was still work to be done', that changing the colours changed many other things too, he was able to forsake the door for other kinds of image.[27] What started as another 'end of painting' strategy developed into something else. Hume's attempt at 'perfect modernism'[28], that is, to achieve an absolute zero degree of values, failed and the introduction of these other colours signalled this (as did, Adrian Searle points out, the painting *More Fucking Values,* 1993). After this the work developed into 'flora, fauna and portraiture'[29]. And yet one thing had remained persistently the same – the use of high gloss enamel paint and colours taken from commercial colour charts.



22. Gary Hume, *Four Doors II,* 1990

If there was some lingering anxiety about the use of industrial materials from Frank Stella on[30], by the time Hume comes to be using

[27] ibid. p.24

[28] Gary Hume quoted by Adrian Searle , 'Behind the Face of the Door' in *Gary Hume,* London: The British Council/ Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2000. p.11

[29] Gary Hume, ibid. p15

[30] Batchelor makes the point that for painters of Frank Stella's era (that is when Stella first made his comment on how he tried to keep paint 'as good as it is in the can' – 1964) the concern that the paint on a picture might not look as good as in its industrial raw state was very significant:

" It may not sound like much, but in a way it was almost everything that mattered at the time. Twenty years earlier it couldn't have been said – or at least not it wouldn't have meant anything very much. But by the early 1960s Stella's concern had come to stand for something quite critical in the relationship of art with the wider world in which it was situated. That Stella sought to 'keep' the

enamel paint the anxiety seems to have been thoroughly worked out, or at least placed elsewhere. After all, the jump from perfect modernism' to 'flora, fauna and portraiture' was a big one, and then even within those two categories the amount of variation, in colour, surface finish etc., was vast. Yet there is still the enamel paint, almost as if this were the one thing that made any sense.

23. Gary Hume, *Kate,* 1996

paint that good suggests that he knew it might be hard to improve on the materials in their raw state; that once the paint had been put to use in art it might well be less interesting than when it was 'in the can'. This is the anxiety he describes: the anxiety that the materials of the modern world might be more interesting than anything that can be done with them in a studio. It is an entirely modern anxiety." op. cit. p22

24. Gary Hume, *Messiah,* 1998

It seems that contemporary painters are well aware of how good paint looks in the can and also how good it looks on a painting. No conflict there. So why would Hume tamper with that surface at all? Why would he sand off Kate Moss' face as he did in *Kate* (1996)? Perhaps there is still some nagging doubt as to what the enamel paint can do? And in other paintings, such as Messiah (1998), there are large sections of the painting that have not been painted, where the aluminium support has been left exposed as if Hume were unsure of what to put there or that his confidence faltered at the last moment. Or maybe it is that the aluminium support looks just as good as the enamel paint in the can or just as good as the can itself.

In terms of this project, one aspect of Hume's work that I would emphasise would be the use of the enamel paint colours which are, as Batchelor writes, 'digitised' colours, that is, 'individuated', 'discrete' units of colour as on the commercial paint colour chart.

"It is not that the digital colour is more true than analogical colour. But it may be true that digitised colours have a stronger relationship with works of art that refer, directly or indirectly to the experience of modernity. These colours are more the colours of things than atmospheres. More urban colours than the colours of nature. City colours. Industrial colours. Coloured plastics, coloured metals, coloured lights. Local, contingent, materially and culturally specific colours."[31]

[31] David Batchelor, op.cit. p26

This material, liberated from the anxieties of not being appropriate to the high art world or of not being true to its industrial raw state, becomes by sheer persistence an acceptable medium for commentary on modern experience. It does so by wearing its 'likeness' on its sleeve. These colours can be seen around us, these surfaces too, as they can in the work of Sarah Morris and many other artists (including David Batchelor) working with industrial materials.

Within the work of Hume, Richter and Morris it is possible to talk about the use of uncertainty as a model with which to provide commentary. This commentary might revolve around different issues within the work of each; with Richter it might be a question of History as well as art history, with Morris art history and its icons and with Hume which historical model to use or the shadow of a doubt about the suitability of the material in use.

Ultimately the aim of this exercise is to establish a context in which the relevance of using or adapting prior models to comment on modern conditions is shown. These models are not used complacently – each time something new is added – indeed their use is fraught with elements of uncertainty, the indeterminate, and ill-fitting fragments; and this fact leaves room for interpretation that goes beyond the historical and into the contemporary.

EVALUATING THE TERRAIN

"Got some more red enamel paint (red to my mind being the best colour), and painted the coal-scuttle, and the backs of our *Shakespeare,* the binding for which had almost worn out... Went home early and bought some more enamel paint – black this time – and spent the evening touching up the fender, picture frames, and an old pair of boots, making them look as good as new. Also painted Gowing's walking-stick, which he left behind, and made it look like ebony."
George Grossmith, *Diary of a Nobody,* 1892

The following section deals with theoretical positions that inform this project. Whilst the previous sections outline one possible description of the Minimal look it is important that the paper also gives a more subjective account of the nature of the questions asked and what I mean by 'Minimalism'. In some ways it is useful to go back to the defining moment, the naming of a movement. Minimalism was one of many possible (usually derogatory) labels. Others were 'ABC Art', 'Rejective Art', 'Literalism', 'Reductive Abstraction' and 'Primary Structures'. What interests me about these labels is the emphasis on *simple* building blocks, wilfully uncomplicated (that is, not complicated *enough*) - ABC, like the brightly coloured letters on the sides of a child's soft toy. There is a superficial reading of Minimalism which stops at this point, that never gets beyond 'Minimal' as 'simple', and whilst any reading of either writing of the 1960's or recent reinterpretation gives the lie to

this, it is nonetheless an aspect that I choose to dwell on. This project plays with a set of simple propositions and articulates some of the expected and unexpected consequences of this play.

USING *THE LOOK*

I wrote earlier of Batchelor's 'problem' with Minimalism - that it 'never existed'. And yet for all the denials of the key protagonists (that they never belonged to any 'movement'), we constantly refer to a minimal aspect and are happy to use the term not to describe any of the social conditions that gave rise to Minimalism or indeed any of the specific concerns of any one artist. We would tend to use the term for its ability to conjure up a certain look or set of looks. It has become generalised. It is this notion of a 'generalised Minimalism' that provides a tool for this project. The schematic account can be made precise; it can be reduced to a short list (accepting that any in depth-look at the list will reveal the limitations of the general). This project makes the point that it is often the schematic account that provides the starting point for new work. This is a point that John Berger makes in his definition of the avant-garde artist as a 'conservative revolutionary'.[32] Berger maintains that all artists, despite any revolutionary intent, are conservative in two ways. Firstly, the artist inevitably will make reference to, will react to, will position themselves in relation to art that went before and in that way conserve this prior art. Secondly, the artist conserves simply by the act of making – they conserve an idea either in terms of a concept and its remembrance or in terms of a material thing. It is one thing to *conserve*. It is another to *use*.

So then, the *look* is minimal. What this project means to try out by proposing a set of Minimal conditions is how these conditions might be used or indeed *misused* and what, consequently, the implications of this use/misuse might be.

In her essay 'Elaborating the Terms – The Practice of Abstraction in Some Recent Art'[33] Carolyn Barnes mentions how some recent geometric abstract painting "reinscribes those blank objects [of Minimalism] with a specific social character, highlighting issues of identity and social positioning as they attach themselves to the art objects, and objects and materials in general." David Batchelor also draws out this point and comments that some recent art takes that "blank" space and "fills" it with a very different content.[34] I want to make a distinction between this reading of a contemporary attitude that attempts to have Minimalism's empty spaces filled *at the expense* of the blank space (to do so would deny that blank space has a role to play). This project interrogates that blank space under the terms of the

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[32] John Berger in conversation, *A Kind of Grace*, Humanistische Omroep Stichting, 1996

[33] Carolyn Barnes, 'Elaborating the Terms, The Practice of Abstraction in Some Recent Art' in *Geometric Painting in Australia 1941 – 1997*, David Pestorius (ed.), Brisbane: University Art Museum, The University of Queensland, p.66

[34] Batchelor, op. cit. p.75

material in which it is presented, uses a system of injunctions which are either followed or not and, furthermore, uses material that reflects back onto the social context in which the above should occur.

To go back to Berger, what the project conserves is a certain look that could be described as 'Minimal'. It could also be described like this: vertical bands of colour / horizontal bands of colour. What happens here, as soon as we go outside the general and look at the specific is that the formal issues which one deals with in the practice of painting these bands of colour must be taken on: things such as pictorial space or lack of it, the painting's surface plane (or absence of it), the relativity and interaction of colours, the edge of the painting and the edges of the component parts within it. These are the formal principles.

This project employs this simple abstract language and its economy of means used in conjunction with simple imperatives or injunctions: use these colours; paint them as bars; vary the order; sand some, use a grid... That is, *use* the formal principles and Minimal conditions.

FINDING THE UNCERTAIN IN THE MINIMAL

"On first glance it all looks so simple, yet in each body of work a perceptual ambiguity complicates things...So what you see is what you see, as Frank Stella famously said, but things are never as simple as they seem: the positivism of minimalism notwithstanding, perception is made reflexive in these works and so rendered complex." [35]

One of the goals of this project is to reframe the statement ' what you see is what you see' as a question which implies that what you see attempts to articulate what is uncertain. In his article on contemporary painters and their proximity to Jean François Lyotard's "presentation of the unpresentable" David Ryan[36] refers to the use of "predetermined mechanisms" which lead to unpredictable ends and that this "indeterminacy" is an effective presentation of the unpresentable. What is "the unpresentable"? Lyotard gives a short list – "the universe, humanity, the end of history, the instant..." In terms of language we would call these abstract notions. But what do we call the unpresentable when it is itself abstract? Some suggestions have been 'the blank space' or 'empty centre'. Lyotard states that the avant-gardes in painting "are a way out of romantic nostalgia because they do not try to find the unpresentable at a great distance, as a lost origin or end, to be represented in the subject of the picture, but in what is closest, in the very matter of artistic work." [37]

Ryan also underlines the point that "experience and its relationship to the indeterminate is constantly restaged" by continually

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[35] Hal Foster, in reference to the work of Donald Judd, Robert Morris et al., *The Return of the Real,* Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press,1996, p. 36

[36] David Ryan, 'Indeterminate Relations' in Contemporary Visual Arts, Issue 23, pp. 48-54

[37] Jean François Lyotard, 'What is at Stake in the Avant-gardes in Painting' in *The Inhuman, Reflections on Time,* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p.126

asking "What is painting?" This project finds some distance from Lyotard's list of abstracts. The distance is one of emphasis. Lyotard proposes that the suggestion of the unpresentable is in the material used in artistic production, that it is manifest in the very *matter* of the paint. At issue in this paper is the proposal that it is the employment of that material (not just deployment), challenged by its *misuse,* which provides the necessary *accessible* space for the suggestion of the abstract notion.

" This infinitely fresh start, 'endlessly turning gear' of painting never aligned with itself, ever latent, ever beforehand, or afterward, in discordance and disjunction is also an opportunity for slipping in a subject."[38]

It is in this questionable practice that the abstract subject could find some space. Further to this issue is the proposal that the sustainability and accessibility of this space depends upon the immanent nature of the material being *not only* one of blankness or emptiness but paradoxically *also* one of 'likeness'. This issue, abstract painting and its relationship to the world of real things, is further developed in Part Three. Put simply here, abstract painting can be seen to reflect back on the world in which it is placed if it is accepted that it is legitimately like other things in that world.

" The formal principles are understandable and understood. It is the unknown quantity from which and where I want to go. As a thing, an object, it accedes to its non-logical self. It is something. It is nothing." [39]

What if Eva Hesse's statement above is rewritten so that it reads 'the formal principles were understood, but now are only half remembered and so *used inappropriately.*' Is it still possible to move towards the unknown quantity that Hesse mentions? Can we still attempt to present the unpresentable? The point here is that Hesse accepts the system, the *formal principles* as givens, as known, as understood. But, between Hesse and now a lot has happened. The formal principles exist no longer as golden rules but as a nice (or not so nice) idea. These rules or concerns have been so thoroughly re-worked, especially in painting, that their self-reflexive nature might have achieved a kind of *self-effacement* and it is this self-effacement that is perhaps a more compelling account of the indeterminate.

This project takes issue with a set of simply stated formal considerations, limited in their scope, repetitive and dependant on their material nature and thus Minimal in precedent, to present these in a way that adequately shows their given nature as questionable, and that further and more importantly shows this uncertain ground as contributing to Lyotard's argument for presenting the unpresentable by implication. That is, the formal concerns that I might employ can be simply stated and yet are *indeterminate in procedure.* They lead the

[38] Patricia Falguieres, *Latant Pictures, Bernard Frize,* Paris: Editions Hazan, 1997, p.102

[39] Eva Hesse quoted by Lucy Lippard and subsequently quoted by Briony Fer in 'Bordering on Blank: Eva Hesse and Minimalism' in *On Abstract Art,*p.112

viewer to a kind of looking that does not claim to be perfect or pure but that nonetheless provides a site for an experience or approximation of an experience that in any other terms is unpresentable. Determined conditions leading to the indeterminate. Determined. Decided upon. Decisive. What if the starting point rests in the indecisive moment, a wavering between this or that position, this or that strategy, these determined points? Are the results not just as indeterminate? Confusing painting cannot articulate confusion – 'babble' is inarticulate. The starting points must at least *look* determined. This could well be one of the Minimal conditions for a painting. Here are some more (though not all are always Minimal): The grid; paint, its (industrial) colours and their (systematic) placement; surface (and its corruption); and the monochrome. The use and misuse of these aspects will be elaborated in Part Three of this paper.

If, as Briony Fer suggests when comparing the work of Eva Hesse and Donald Judd[40], the blank face of Minimalism covers up the emptiness of the art object - would breaching the blank surface reveal this emptiness?

"This brings to mind the term used by Lacan for the uncanny, *l'exrtemite,* pointing towards that which is neither exterior nor interior but which breaks the continuous skin to reveal the empty centre, the space of the Real. [...] And the kind of anxiety generated is quite different from that of Eva Hesse, less an economy of loss than a series of defensive strategies to cover the empty object which Judd himself has revealed. This is played out on the border between inside and outside and where a breach or threatened injury to that 'skin' may generate a situation of anxiety."[41]

What would it then mean to pick out the details of that literal injury, to elaborate and even decorate them? Would it remove the threat and it's anxiety by aligning the injury with the comfort of the everyday?[42]

Rosalind Krauss saw Minimalism as anti-rationalist, that is, as the repetitive product of an obsessive mind and as an example of covering up absurdity. [43] Nonetheless the lingering perception of Minimalism is that it is thoroughly rational, it is as rational as it is industrial. Furthermore the ideals of Minimalism - its supposed perfection - might be seen as at odds with our experience of the everyday urban context. Perhaps, there has always been an unwillingness to completely give up on preceding models. But in this project the 'unwillingness' takes the form of a sentimental attachment to the look of Minimalism coupled with an unease with its unquestioned use. The problem for the artist and what is at stake in this proposal is to find ways of addressing these and the preceding issues and to find effective use for Minimalism.

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[40] Briony Fer, op.cit. pp. 148-149

[41] ibid p.145

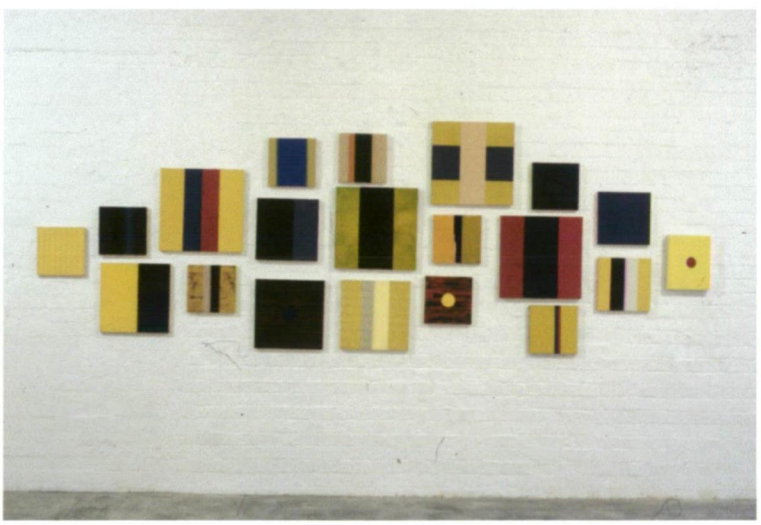
[42] ibid p.145

[43] Rosalind Krauss, "Le Witt in Progress', in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1985, pp. 245-59

PART THREE: DEVELOPMENT: WORK AND IDEAS

This part of the paper details the development of individual works undertaken as part of the project. This includes an explanation of practical issues; that is, how the works were made and with what material. It also includes a discussion of how the ideas behind each work or set of works explore the proposal and central argument of this project. To do this the focus is on individual paintings which best show the points being discussed and which best represent a series which may contain several paintings. The work will be discussed in chronological order starting with a brief account of work completed immediately prior to commencing the project but which helps establish a starting point. Also included are edited notebook entries, made over the course of the project, which explore the work's development in relation to the central argument.[1]

TWENTY PAINTINGS, 1998



25. *Twenty Paintings*, 1998[2]

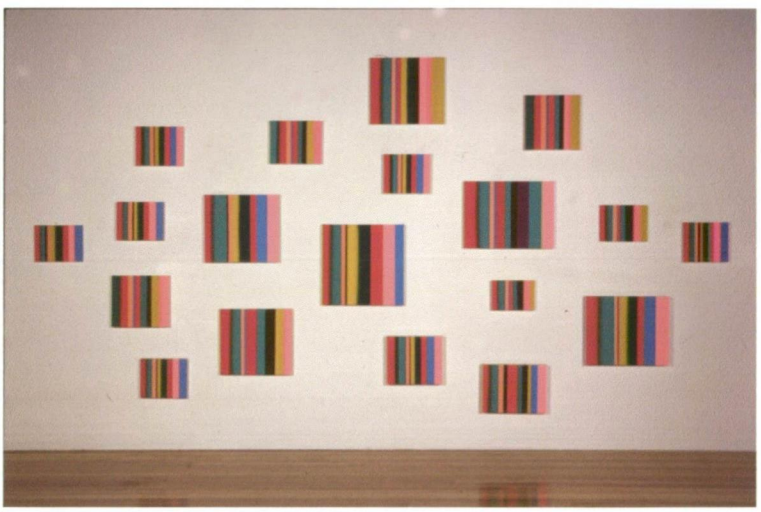
This group of variously sized panels consists of paintings made on canvas, MDF board and paper glued onto canvas. A wide range of materials was used including 'artist's quality' oil and acrylic paint, household emulsion and enamel paint and polyurethane varnishes. Briefly put, the intention of this work was to establish within the one dominant framework (the vertical and horizontal bands of colour) a multiplicity of approaches, taking literally the notion of 'less is more'. Importantly in relation to the research project there were several panels

[1] These notebook entries are shown in Italics. Bold type indicates points that have a bearing on the central argument of this project.

[2] All works illustrated in this section are by Neil Haddon, see appendix for details.

within this work which allowed flaws, mistakes and errors (such as the ripping of a painted surface by the removal of masking tape or the bleeding of a supposed 'hard edge' into raw canvas) to be left exposed. At the time these actions were derived from an attitude which whilst acknowledging the precedence of Minimalism deliberately failed to conform to it completely. The historical revision was only partially sighted. The resulting mistakes and flaws were the result of the human hand within the Minimal ideal. This notion is developed and taken further in the research project. Whilst most of the panels employed horizontal or vertical bands of colour the edges of these bands were all painted differently. Some used masking tape, some were hand drawn, some were partially erased either with solvent or water. **My explanation of this centred on a notion that the work expressed an attitude of faltering confidence both in itself and in the context in which it was produced. Again this was something that informed the starting point of my research project and which is developed further.**

IDLE SHIFT, 1999



26. *Idle Shift*, 1999

These were the first paintings made within the parameters of the research project. *Idle Shift* consists of nineteen canvases all painted with flat household acrylic paint. The edges of each band of colour (all of which vary in width) are either masked hard edges or 'blurred', that is, smoothly blended. Each canvas uses the same set of colours in sequences which, although not the same, are seen to imply some kind of consistent order. However this consistent order remains out of reach. It is unclear whether the work is attempting to achieve 'correct ' order or indulging an attempted flight from it. As stated in the central argument the project attempts to establish a set of formal procedures which are then explored in different ways in several groups of work. ***Idle Shift*** **was the first work which foregrounds the sequencing of colours and**

a way in which this sequencing might include a random aspect within it.

Notebook entry: *LOOKING AND LAZINESS*

"Most of the time we have very little choice but to treat things in a generally utilitarian way; we have to get around, feed, clothe and shelter ourselves (assuming we cannot get someone else to do it for us). Art may represent the attempt momentarily to step outside that cycle of experience, in order to look at things in a disinterested way, without prejudice and without hierarchy; in a way, that is, where everything would be *equivalent.*"[3]

There is a game to be played. The immediate impression should be that there is an order to the bars of colour (light blue, yellow, khaki, etc.), logical and systematic. On closer inspection that order breaks down, the placement of colours is not consistent, mistakes are made and left. What is at stake here is an allusion to the formal problem solving logic that an adult might employ as distinct to a less formal logic. We could call the bars of colour 'the variables' and the problem to be solved 'the correct ordering and placement of those colours'. One way of solving the problem is to change one variable at a time, a less formal logic, the informal or playful would change all of the variables all of the time. In fact the problem solving logic at play in the paintings is somewhere between the two of these.

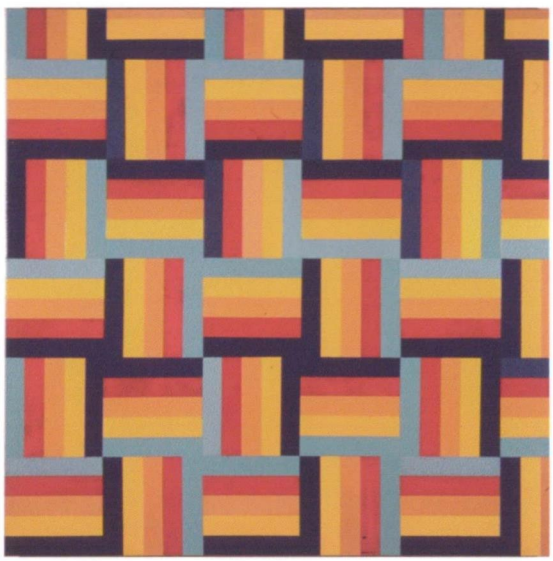
Whilst the paintings might appear to employ a systematic and logically pre-determined order of colours, in fact the order is determined at the time of painting and varies along very simple lines. For example, start with dark blue and finish with light blue. Start the middle three on this row with red and finish with yellow (reading left to right?), reverse it on the next row. I would tend to see the ordering of the colours as using an informal logic whilst retaining the veneer of a more formal logic. Initially they look simple but on closer inspection not so simple and then once worked out the simplicity is restored.

What has been gained over this short journey? The point becomes one of looking. What the placement of the colours attempts to articulate is that whilst the system employed is knowable because the initial visual evidence suggest,s this in fact the system is peppered with inconsistencies to the extent that it quickly becomes non-systematic. The crucial aspect is that whilst it might be possible to read the paintings as being ordered, indeed about order, the invitation is this: look beyond that, just look. But clearly this looking presents contradictions. This possibly is an attempt to escape a critique of Minimalism which states "it refuses to picture something else, a refusal which finally returns the

[3] David Batchelor, *Minimalism*, London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1997 p.60

viewer – at best a more disillusioned viewer to more of the same." [4] *There is something here to see, to discover in the changes across the surface. The values, one discovers, be it a straight edge or a repeated sequence of colours are continually contradicted. What must happen is that despite the contradictions the paintings come very close to being 'just more of the same'.*

WEAR No.1, 1999



27. *Wear No.1*, 1999

Whereas *Idle Shift* has a matte finish *Wear No.1* is painted with high gloss household enamel paint as a contradiction, in a sense, to the flat surface of *Idle Shift*. It was made by applying several coats of enamel paint to the canvas before commencing the final stages of the painting. This was initially an attempt to create a smooth surface and minimise the presence of the weave of the canvas in the finished painting. A grid was drawn up on the canvas but so that it did not fit within the proportions of the stretcher. The sequence of the colours that was subsequently painted on make more of the order/disorder strategy outlined above. The first painting of this grid was sanded back (by hand) to eliminate surface inconsistencies and then repainted. During this repainting I realised that the worn surface of some of the bars of colour in many ways contributed to the argument of the project.

[4] Anna C. Chave, 'Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power' in *Art in Modern Culture, An Anthology of Critical Texts*, Francis Frascina & Jonathan Harris (eds.), London: Phaidon Press, 1992

Notebook entry: *FLAT, GLOSS AND CORRUPTION*

Gloss and flat (matte). Already there's something in parenthesis. Nothing could be simpler. No grey areas. Nothing between these two. No semi-gloss. No low sheen. Are these nonetheless implicit in the distance between matte and gloss? Between the two poles a middle ground is created. Simply, the space 'inbetween'. The space where the nature of each pole is questioned by virtue of its opposite. It is in this middle ground that the painting's potential (to act, to provoke thought etc.) is continually reborn. But, it is also the site of its continual death. The inbetween space is vulnerable – it is a space that has no definite characteristic that can be stated other than in the terms of the two poles in between which it sits. It has no character that can be fully articulated. It is this inability to articulate with terms other than its own that has the potential to threaten and where painting has been felt to be lacking (in realness), that it is insubstantial and irrelevant.

The flat surface is gloss paint that has been sanded. In Wear No.1 1999 the individual bars were sanded by hand. Beyond the obvious fact that the sanded surface no longer reflects either an image of the viewer, or the space, or catches the glare of lights is the evidence of the making of the painting, of the painted surface which is not so much in the finished state of gloss paint but in the erasure of it. The surface that allows the viewer to see more clearly what is there (without the supposed distraction of unwanted reflections) is also the surface that shows most evidence of labour. Think about an author (artist) disappearing to leave space for the reader (viewer). A gloss surface reflects back an image of the person looking at it. If that surface is sanded, what is there can be seen more clearly, without distraction.

"We speak of a 'black' mirror. But where it mirrors, it darkens, of course, but it doesn't look black and that which is seen in it does not appear 'dirty' but 'deep'."[5]

The reflective surface of the high gloss enamel is limited. It does not reflect in the same way that a mirror does. A mirror reflects precisely, if not in any depth. Gloss paint reflects through the filter of a colour. And different colours have different depths. Gloss paint needs a highlight to show off its inherent contradiction: it shows reflected space and even depth and at the same time shimmers as surface. The reflection is veiled and distorted by any minor inconsistency in that surface, be it a speck of dust, brush mark or drip. Sanded gloss enamel paint does not reflect. Gloss enamel paint on an inconsistently flat surface reflects highlights like a Van Gogh painting of a streetlight.

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[5] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks On Colour*, G.E.M. Anscombe (ed.), Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press,1978, p.4

The reflective surface of gloss enamel paint might imply a certain depth whilst remaining resolutely as surface. It is difficult to determine what the reflected space is. It is not a mirrored space. It would not deceive you.

WEAR No.2, 1999

Wear No.2 is also high gloss enamel paint on canvas. Again there are several layers of underpainting which are revealed by sanding back an initial painting of the grid. The patches of worn painting left exposed in the final state are more pronounced than in *Wear No.1*. Each worn patch is contained within the squares formed by the horizontal and vertical divisions of the grid. There are also several areas of this painting where the edges of the bars of colour are blended together so as to appear blurred. Comments about this painting and *Wear No.1* frequently referred to the paintings' similarity to parquet or linoleum flooring.

Notebook entry: *POLISHING THE FLOOR*

Parquet flooring. Linoleum flooring. It's acceptable that the paintings be seen like this because this act of comparison escapes the dead end nature of abstract painting that does not depict anything.[6] *It is quite acceptable for a painting to appear like a floor covering when it quite clearly is not floor covering. It is an abstract painting but it exists in the world of things and will inevitably provoke comparisons with some of those things. In this way it might even be said that this is a desirable outcome of abstract painting, which is not to say that the work should represent so much as appear 'like'. There is a world of difference; perhaps the most important point is that this thinking enables abstract painting to be seen as legitimate because of its relationship to the world of real things.* ***The use of commercial household paints seen in this light takes on a far more dominant role; we can approve of this painting because it appears like what is around us.***

It is absurd to sand gloss paint and perhaps the worn surface simultaneously deflects the illusion of the high gloss surface referring to some other veneer (laminex). It returns us to the painted surface, worn but viewable.

The matt surface absorbs. The gloss surface reflects, reflects the gaze or deflects that absorbed looking.

There is some depth in a gloss paint surface. But it is difficult to call it an illusory depth. If that gloss surface is breached, its support exposed, what happens? Clearly some sort of illusion has been lost. And what might it mean then to repaint the worn surface but paint

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[6] See David Batchelor, 'Abstraction, Modernism, Representation' in *Thinking Art:: Beyond Traditional Aesthetics,* Andrew Benjamin, & Peter Osborne (eds.),London:
Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1991 p.53

around the worn patches? The relationship of the breached surface of the paint (and the grid) to its support is held up for question. The corruption of the surface is perhaps indicative of a much wider corruption: that is the corruption of 'high art' by market driven design, commercial art and the visuals of the world wide web. Have these gone on to supersede high art to the point where they have become more compelling in their dazzling visual display? How can painting compete against them? ***Circle the worn surface, select the blemishes, characterise and figure the moments of breaching the divide between the iconic high art object and the world of other things.***

WEAR No.3 and WEAR No.4, 2000

28. *Wear No.3*, 2000

Wear No.3 is the first painting that was made on an aluminium panel. Up to this point all of the *Wear* series of paintings had been painted on canvas with several layers of underpainting. When sanding these back (now using an electric palm-sander) I was aware of not being able to go back to raw canvas, to erase to the point of ground zero, or a point at which there was no painting. Consequently aluminium was used as this would enable a more complete erasure and importantly have the worn patches functioning on a par with the enamel paint around them. That is, the exposed aluminium in its hard metallic industrial state was equivalent to the industrial associations of the high gloss enamel paint. Having said this, the worn patches that were left in the final state of the painting were relatively few and all quite small. A more important strategy which was foregrounded in *Wear No.3* and *Wear No.4* was the way in which the grid was seen to not fit within the confines of the painting's edges. The grids were drawn up on the painting's surface by hand, scaling up a distorted grid that had been designed on a computer.

The distortion was a slight perspective 'receding' of both horizontal and vertical axes which was further compounded by a skewing of this grid to the picture plane. The proportions of the grid bear no relation to the proportions of the panels.

29. *Wear No.4,* 2000

Notebook entry: *THE GRID*

"Unlike perspective, the grid does not map the space of a room or a landscape or a group of figures onto the surface of a painting. Indeed if it maps anything, it maps the surface of the painting itself. It is a transfer in which nothing changes place. The material qualities of the surface, we could say, are mapped onto the aesthetic dimensions of the same surface. And those two planes – the material and the aesthetic – are demonstrated to be the same plane: coextensive, and, through the abyssa and ordinates of the grid, coordinate. Considered in this way, the bottom line of the grid is a naked and determined materialism."[7]

A further question to the formal issues mentioned has been, 'Within what framework should all of the above happen?' This framework has been a take on a simple grid that sits squarely upon the picture surface. The decision to use this grid was based on two factors: on the one hand or rather in the one hand was a book or two that have reproductions of the many, many paintings that have grids in them; and in the other hand was a roll of masking tape which is far more effective if you apply it in straight lines (material dictating course of action).

One of the things that interests me now about the modular grid is its upfrontness. That is to say, what you see in the first instance does not

[7] Rosalind Krauss, 'Grids, You Say.' in *Grids, Format and Image in 20th Century Art,* New York: The Pace Gallery, 1979, unpaginated

supposedly change on a more detailed analysis. As Yves-Alain Bois wrote:

[The grid] " was a key moment in their struggle in what we would call the arbitrariness of composition (Greenberg's "gift for placing"), against what they called the subjective, the angst, the particular, the natural, the undetermined, the relative ... The power of the modular grid is that it is at once a deductive (centripetal) structure and all-over (centrifugal) system. As such (the modular grid) eliminates any notion of a final formal unity: this unity is a given at the beginning, thus there is no struggle to achieve it; it is not a reward." [8]

The upfrontness of this grid, the fact that its starting point and finishing point are the same needs to be looked at; look at the comforting nature of it. By taking a modular grid and laying it down so that it does not quite fit, the intention is to take issue with the given nature of that grid. That is to say, question its implicit perfection by quite simply getting it wrong, avoiding the temptation to divide the height and width of the stretcher up into equal parts so that the grid fits perfectly within them. Whilst the grids that were initially employed used a consistent spacing, they did not fit. Recent works extend this aspect by the grid shying away from the picture plane on which it should ideally sit. They are seen to be 'not fitting'. So one question is raised about the grid's implicit perfection. Another question is to what extent does this open the grid up? To make it vulnerable? More human?

The point is to question the grid's unquestionable nature. It is what it is. Upfront and all at once. It is its beginning and end. There is no movement, no shifting ground. If the grid were Heideggar's temple (making sense of the raging storm),[9] *it would not even let us see the storm. It stands fast against nothing. But the grid's inadequacies are also its strong points. What it fails to do, it does brilliantly. It doesn't take much to subvert that brilliance by a twist here or a worn surface there. The ideal grid is always there - upfront, all at once and so on. Its reality is different and far from perfect.*

Wear No.4 explores ideas already outlined about the sequencing of the bars of colour, the occasional blurring of edges and the distortion of the grid. It also elaborates the repainting of the worn grid as an act that - rather than being imperfectly done - begins to indulge a fascination with the worn patches, the inconsistencies and flaws. The worn patches are painted around and are celebrated.

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[8] Yve Alain-Bois, 'The Limit of Almost' in *Ad Reinhardt,* New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1991, unpaginated

[9] See Martin Heideggar, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Poetry, Language and Thought,* London: Harper & Row, 1971, pp. 41-42

THE *PATCH* SERIES

30. *Patch No.1,* 2001

At this point it became important to tackle the choice of colours used. Having decided that the use of paint bought exclusively from the hardware store helped bring these abstract paintings back into the world of real things (the colours are the colours we see around us in an urban context), the next step seemed to be a more thorough application of this idea. By using a reference to the paint colour charts displayed in the store, this issue was accentuated. The question was *which colours to choose?* Previously the early critical accounts of what we now call Minimalism, including names mooted as appropriate for this kind of art were mentioned. 'ABC Art' was one possibility.

All of the colours on the store colour chart have a name. From one brand of paint a selection was made of all the colours that began with A, all that began with B and so on for the first six letters of the alphabet. This seemed to provide a system of sorts for the choosing of colours, one that did not rely on anything other than the colour's name. This appeared to be an appropriate strategy, one that attempts to mimic a system-based approach to making art but that is flawed in the regard that an aesthetic choice still has to be made within the system - there is always more than one colour available for each of the letters of the alphabet. There is a human intervention within the system. In another way, this approach also added to the sequencing of the colours that, once chosen, can be seen to have a 'correct' order. That is, A B C D E F. This then permits the flaws within the placement of these colours to be potentially more apparent.

31. *Patch No.2*, 2001

Notebook entry: *THE PAINT ITS COLOURS AND THEIR PLACEMENT*

"... painting is always permeable to outside 'influences' (such as the contingencies of industrial production and commercial standardization that govern the size of the cans of paint, the range of a printer, or the dimensions of brushes); no truly raw material exists, any more than does an art exempt from vulgar contamination. Whereby painting becomes part of the syntax of the world."[10]

The colours used so far are pre-mixed according to colour samples or colour charts made for household and trade paints. Commercial paints are easy to acquire. They can be bought at the local hardware store, mixed according to colour charts that are seemingly infinite in the number of colours available. In fact there are a finite number and each one is represented by a small rectangle on the colour chart.

"At the heart of this system (...) lies a small strip of paper with a few rectangular swatches of colour printed on it: the colour chart. The colour chart: a disposable list of ready-made colour. Each strip of paper a perfect example of colour serialism; or one page of a vast catalogue raisonne of monochromes. The colour chart is to commercial colours what the colour circle is to artist's colours." [11]

David Batchelor examines the role of what he calls these individuated or digitised colours in relationship to the colour wheel and traditional

[10] Patricia Falguieres, op. cit. p.95
[11] David Batchelor, 'Of Cans, Corruption, And Colour' in *Gary Hume*, op.cit. p.25

artist's colours. Commercial paints are accessible not only in a physical sense but also in the way that they still come free of the hierarchical values of the colour wheel. They might also be more accessible for the reason that they are the colours of our everyday urban context. As Batchelor puts it:

" These colours are more the colours of things than atmospheres. More urban colours than the colours of nature. City colours. Industrial colours. Coloured plastics, coloured metals, coloured lights. Local, contingent, materially and culturally specific colours." [12]

Perhaps it is in recognition of this that commercial paints attempt to make up for their lack of 'atmosphere' with exotic names and faux expressionism, for example Amber Leaf, Brownberry, Centennial Yellow, Dauphin Grey, Egyptian Red and Frosty Toffee.

"... no colour can transcend history; it is always caught in an historical, social, etc. code, and is always legible.
- Correction: Suppose colour is unrecognisable? Or unidentifiable?"[13]

Might this have something to do with how a commercial household paint (discounting marketing strategies for a moment) tries to escape its legibility by being named in the most non-legible of ways. This suggesting that the colour seen only by its name has to be guessed at. Not like Cadmium Red for example, which has its colour in its name (because of our familiarity with it).

"The colour spectrum is continuous, and it is language that cuts it up. It is neither in nature nor in the eye that orange ceases to be orange and becomes red, nor in the speaking subjects, who faced with such a sample of colour, decide its name."[14]

And so to go back to the colour chart and its names – look at the array of colour samples and their subtle gradations across the board. They are cut out sections and there could be still more – it could go on forever – in theory but not in perception. And what about the names? They are anything but arbitrary. They are chosen to suggest 'likeness'. The colour in the pot is not isolated – it comes from some thing.

WEAR DRAWING, 2000

This work on paper was the first to use the strategy for selecting colours outlined previously. It also employed the use of a masking liquid to make marks that disrupt the integrity of the grid. The painting was

[12] *ibid.* p.27
[13] Patricia Falguieres, op. cit. p.95
[14] Thierry de Duve, 'Colour and its Name' in *Pictorial Nomalism* p.135

painted over the latex masking fluid which was then removed. **Although this method of masking was not used subsequently, masking became an important procedure and from this time on ways of doing it effectively were sought out.**

THE FOIL SERIES, 2001

32. *Foil No.1*, 2001

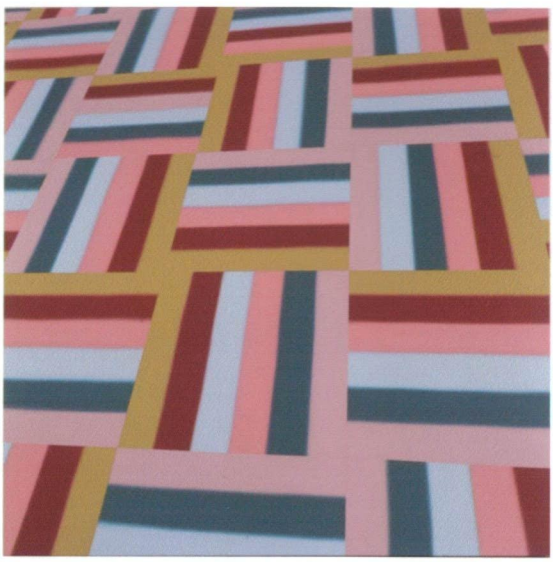
Having worked for a period of time almost exclusively with enamel a series of works that acted literally as foils to the gloss paintings was made. A new set of colours again using the naming system was purchased. The issue to be foregrounded in this series was the clash of hard edge and blurred edge. To achieve this the paintings were not to be sanded back, nor any patches or inconsistencies to be seen in the painting's surface. Furthermore the blending of the edges of each bar of colour was to run consistently across the surface but only within each unit of the grid. The horizontal and vertical axes of the grid were masked and painted as precise, clean hard edges.

Notebook entry: *Blurred Certainty*

These lines should be in focus. Perhaps if there was an attempt to provoke the illusion of lines receding back into space and to use our understanding of photographic language (depth of field) they should become progressively more blurred as they recede. It is hard to see them as sitting on the same plane as the hard edge. Their certainty is blurred. This seems to fit with Kuspit's reading of Gerhard Richter's blurred paintings which states that blurring serves as a distancing from the subject matter of the work. ***In one way the subject matter that is***

being distanced in the Foil paintings is the implied certainty of the ideal grid. Its detail remains out of focus and unknowable.

FOIL No.4, 2001



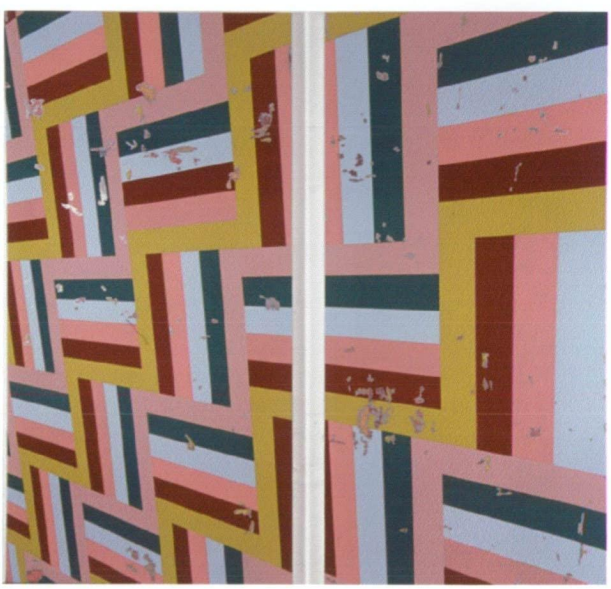
33. *Foil No.4,* 2001

The perspectival distortion used up until this point had been relatively subdued. This had been a deliberate strategy to prevent the paintings being seen as an illusionistic depiction of space whilst emphasising the gird's imperfect fit within the proportions of the stretcher or panel. **With *Foil No.4* I am relying on the flattening nature of the matte household paint to contradict the spatial convention of the more acute perspective drawing. This coupled with the contradictory nature of the blurred versus hard edge allows for this more radical distortion.**

PATCH NO.1 & 3, 2001

The first painting of *Patch No.1* followed the procedures of prior paintings. It consists of two aluminium panels butted together to form one large panel. The first stage of the painting was sanded back and then repainted leaving the worn patches where the aluminium panel is exposed. There were some bars that had blurred edges though most were hard edged. The grid used only a slight perspective distortion. A number of problems were encountered with this painting that led to its eventual partial removal. Because of the larger scale there was more surface area to cover when painting each bar. The presence of brush marks in the enamel paint (which is very unforgiving of repeated working) was clearly seen in the finished state of the painting. This was

even more evident in the areas in which an irregular mark (the worn patches) was painted around and also at the blurred edges of some of the bars of colour. This 'hand-painted' quality on this scale seemed at odds with the play on industrial qualities in the preceding work. The presence of the worn patches was understated and seemed inconsequential. For these reasons it was decided to repaint *Patch No.1*. Paint stripper was applied to the painting and the majority of the initial painting scrapped off. There were some patches that could not be easily removed and these were left. The two panels were then sanded. By this stage *Foil No.4* and *Foil No.5* had been completed and the more extreme perspective distortion was applied to *Patch No.1*. A set of gloss enamel paints that matched the flat acrylic colours of *Foil No.4* and *No.5* was bought. Rather than paint around the patches of the first stage of the painting by hand, small vinyl 'pre-mask' decals (as used by commercial sign writers in computer guided laser cut lettering) were made of each patch. The decals do not precisely follow the patches but leave a border of between two to three millimetres between the paint residue and aluminium support. Furthermore the decals soften all of the angles so that each is made of curves. The decals were stuck to the painting's surface and then each bar painted and the decals removed. For each patch seen in the finished state of the painting, several masks had to be made, as each mask must be removed before the enamel paint dries, and for each colour only the bars that correspond to that colour can be painted in the one session.



34. *Patch No.1 & 3*, 2001

Notebook entry: *Patches or Virtual Patches?*

These worn patches are different. If one of the strategies here is to "celebrate the breaches" these do so more successfully - they are at

once part of the painting and somehow not part of it. The marks were left initially by an imperfect application of an industrial procedure; the electric sander has not removed all the evidence of the previous 'trial and error'. There are mistakes, imperfections which are at the same time, quite deliberate. ***The evidence of literal damage to the painting surface becomes to some extent, figurative.*** *The cut vinyl masking process now seems to link the work back to the industrial perfection of Minimalism. The flaws and mistakes are dealt with using a procedure commonly used by commercial sign writers. This almost reverses the proposal in this project. It raises the status of the flaw to a different level whilst it subverts the perfection of the pristine surface, finding a common ground between the two. The procedure for dealing with these worn patches uses industrial applications. The 'look' becomes once again Minimal, but at the same time, has its starting point in the flaw.* ***The painting uses the Minimal look to depict fallibility and the contingencies of a more down to earth world.***

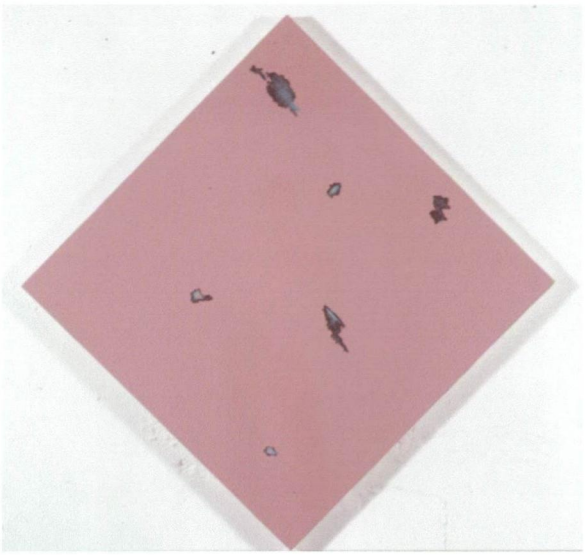
Breach No.1, 2001

35. *Breach No.1*, 2001

Several layers of underpainting were applied to this painting with a roller before it was sanded back using the electric palm sander. This worn surface forms the ground for the subsequent painting. The distorted grid of previous paintings is rejected in this painting in favour of a 'flat' one. The bars which divide each unit of the grid are vertical rather than horizontal. The purpose of this is to focus attention on the sequencing of colours. Two 'sets' are used, both of which can be seen in other paintings but this is the first time that more than one set is used in the same painting.

The colours are placed one from each set alternately across the painting, (A,a,B,b,C,c and so on, where 'A' is from set 1 and 'a' from

set 2) and then this is reversed on the next row. The imperfections in the application of this system are frequent but not so as to undermine the overall impression that there is a 'correct' order. The worn patches sit in an indeterminate relationship to the textured surface of the pristine grid. They reveal what is behind the grid as well as floating across it, obscuring its surface. They damage or breach that grid whilst they remain independent of it.



36. *Breach No.2,* 2001

Each painting made for this project contains elements that appear in others; however in each one a particular aspect of the strategy of misuse is given emphasis. There is a certain amount of 'cross referencing' that can be done within the group, that is, finding the same colours in more than one painting, the same sequencing of those colours, the same wearing down of surface. But each painting nonetheless has its own unique characteristics. These are the result of the interventions within the Minimal conditions, the breaching of its pristine value or the admittance of a more open, accessible face value. Throughout the elaboration of this work it has been important to avoid the simple damaging of a certain kind of abstract painting. The point has always been to go one step further, to use the evidence of the damage as another value within the language of that painting and to find ways of foregrounding the *deliberate selection* of that evidence rather than leaving it as arbitrary gesture.

PART FOUR: CONCLUSION

Commentary by both critics and artists alike, from the mid 60's to the present offers no definitive answer to the question 'What is Minimalism?' The lack of definition leaves the thing that we call Minimalism wide open to re-evaluation.

However, this project necessarily must identify the conditions commonly attributed to Minimalism if it is to subsequently use those conditions. To this end, this paper identifies key artworks which establish a visual and conceptual understanding of what those conditions are. There is disagreement on who the Minimalists were but a consensus on what the visual conditions for Minimalism are. These values and conditions can also be thought of as 'the look' or 'style'. The project maintains that these conditions – the look - have come down to us as certain, untainted, idealistic and aloof.

This project establishes that the realities of the everyday, the wear and tear of use, uncertainty and contradiction, conflict with the pristine values of Minimalism, and yet, when applied to and extended within abstract geometric painting can reposition Minimalism as effectively part of that everyday experience rather than distant from it. The project also maintains that to align a Minimal look with the everyday is not necessarily to lose sight of the abstract core or blank space.

To address the preceding issues a strategy of *misuse* was developed. This strategy takes the defined set of characteristics, and in their application within a series of paintings inserts contradictions that question their perceived certainties. One example of this methodology would be the way that the perception of the ideal grid, one that is regular and proportional, symmetrical and *flat,* is questioned so that in its application within a painting it becomes irregular, ill-fitting, asymmetrical and skewed. One problem with this strategy is that the resultant work runs the risk of being seen to address questions other than those within the parameters of this project. With regard to the skewing of the grid for example, the use of a perspectival distortion might imply a concern with the illusion of pictorial space or perspective itself. Consequently ways of countering these problems had to be found. Whilst the perspective is clearly there, its illusionistic qualities or its description of space are contradicted. The paintings remain close to the *face value* of Minimalism.

What has been gained by employing this strategy? The 'misuse' turns some of the handed down values on their head. The intention is to effectively place under the spotlight a model for abstract painting that recoils from simply pursuing 'more of the same'. This new model might then be seen to articulate the uncertainties that the perceived model of Minimalism excludes. This articulation relies on the new model being conversant with 'human fallibility' and the blemishes of the real world. This misuse challenges the assumptions made about Minimalism but more importantly provides a visual and conceptual account of the way

in which the 'aloof' status of Minimalism can be brought 'back down to earth.' The change inserts doubt and uncertainty, opening up (and leaving open) the sealed perfection of Minimalism.

The project shows that a clash of values; on the one hand the supposed idealised, pristine values of Minimalism, on the other the scuffed corners and uncertainties of the real world, confronted in the one body of work yield a different kind of abstraction from that handed down from the mid 60's. If one accepts the conditions attributed to Minimalism outlined in this project, then to effectively employ strategies that subvert those values makes the resultant work unminimal. It is a kind of abstraction which acknowledges and accepts its place within a world of other things; that it is not divorced from that world. It finds affinity with an imperfect world whilst clinging to the notion that within all of this there is still room for the blank space of abstraction - the blank spaces that the perceived model of Minimalism would have hermetically sealed.

This project addresses four questions posed in the Central Argument. In summary the answers to these questions are as follows. Firstly, with regard to how painting can use the accepted Minimal model. If the information taken from that model is kept at a superficial level the risk is that the paintings will be read in the same superficial light. This would be true if something new were not proposed – an extension of that initial reading or its use as a tool for an ulterior motive. In a purely visual sense, the paintings (once the *type* is recognised) contain things that should *not* be there, that are out of place – they make the type less certain. In many ways the paintings that resulted from this project *are* superficial but I feel that their use lies in what they propose to do with that quality, to see how well it stands up to the rigours of the everyday.

Secondly, taking Berger's point that new work will inevitably contain or refer to prior work, the precedent is recognised whilst it is simultaneously challenged. The challenge in the case of these paintings is to re-present an expanded model as less idealised, and aligned within its' social and cultural context. Clearly the most radical challenge would be to discard the precedent completely, but this would deny what I would describe as a sentimental attachment to Minimalism or the feeling that there is *something* there to be used, something that is still relevant. I think this is more than just the use of a style to identify a painting as a particular kind of artwork. If this is all it were, the proposal of this project would fail. Again the aim of this project was to extend the initial identification into a fresh arena, to question the comfort of that initial reading.

Thirdly, whether the paintings retain an abstract core or whether this is 'filled' by a more recognisable content depend on what they are seen to resemble. They look like floor coverings, wallpaper, building facades; the colours can remind one of the colours seen in the urban context, but they are also clearly *abstract* paintings. As such the indeterminate nature of the blank space is still present but it is couched in terms that make it more familiar or more accessible.

Lastly, there are many readings of Minimalism that highlight uncertain and indeterminate values right from the outset but this project

relies on a different account. This account is a *superficial* one. It looks at the surface values (the characteristics of Minimalism) as closed within their own perfection, their pristine state. And it is this most familiar generic model that this project takes as its precedent. The paintings that resulted from the use of this precedent are however, seen as uncertain and indeterminate both in their abstract nature and in the way that they de-familiarise the generic - but only up to a certain point. They are seen to be have an affinity to the Minimal characteristic, but in their accessible nature - their recognisability - they are made more "human".

The project utilises Minimal conditions but takes their misapplication as a vehicle for the elaboration of a different model for abstract geometric painting. Consequently the paintings may not be Minimal, and if they are not it is difficult to determine what they are (other than to say they are a form of hybrid painting). Ultimately the conclusion must remain open if the project is to succeed; and as such it proposes to extend the "closure" of Minimalism, not redefining it so much as re-aligning it.

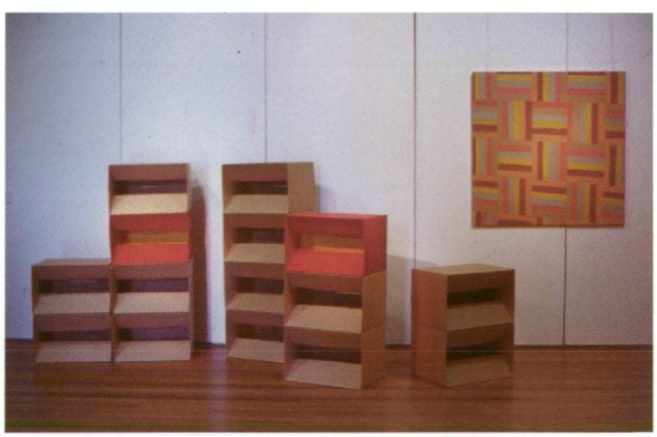
APPENDIX 1: OTHER WORK RELATED TO THE PROJECT

Not Quite Cadmium Red Light, 1998 - ongoing

This work was first developed in response to the working environment of the storeroom at the Blundstone boot factory in Moonah, Tasmania. It is related to the project in several ways but put simply was (in its first manifestation) an attempt to find some common ground between the factory where I worked and the studio space where I worked as an artist. The common ground took a simple visual coincidence between the specific objects of Donald Judd and the stacking of empty cardboard boxes in the storeroom. The hybrid artwork, using the actual boxes from the storeroom (great care was taken to only select 'new' or unused boxes) was presented in a gallery context and in such a way as to undermine the intended use of the boxes. Most of the boxes were left in their original state, one was painted with flat sign-writer's acrylic paint with a colour as close to the artist's colour, cadmium red light, as I could get.

N.Q.C.R.L has been exhibited various times since its first showing. Each time changes are made to the number of boxes presented, their configuration, and the number which are painted in relation to the number that are not.

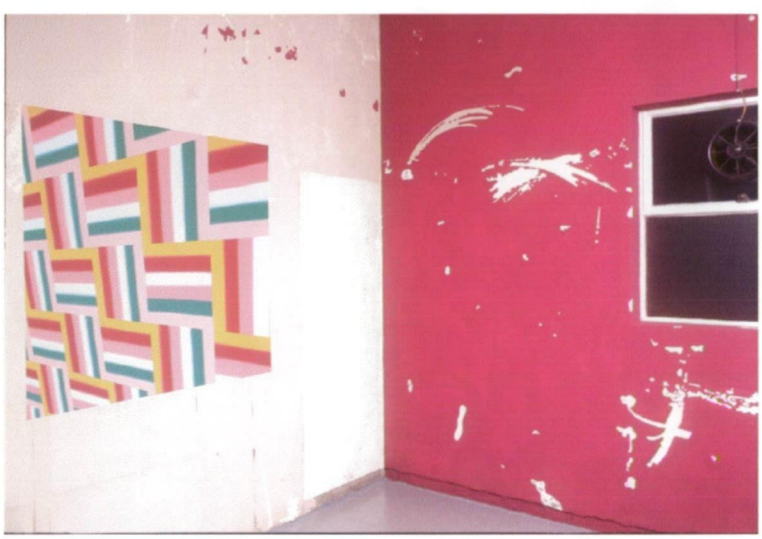
37. & 38. *Not Quite Cadmium Red Light,* above1999, below 2000



Nihil Sub Sole Novum – What Donna Tartt Said, 2001

This work was painted directly onto the walls of an exhibition venue (LSSp, Hobart). It consisted of three substantial murals although the whole space and remainder of the unpainted walls was incorporated into the work which became as much an environment as a display of individual pieces.

The poor condition of the walls in the venue, peeling paint, patches of plaster, scratches and other marks provided a platform from which to launch the repainting of these walls. On one wall a grid was painted which was essentially the same as the 'Foil' series of paintings. The mural measuring 130cm x 130cm was painted onto a section of wall which had been returned to its pristine state, That is, the plaster had been repaired, the peeling paint removed and then repainted so that the subsequent mural fits neatly onto an 'undamaged' square of wall. All around the mural, apart from a washing down, the wall was left as it had been found. The grid sits in stark contrast to the degraded wall. The perspectival distortion seemed to offer a window onto an idealised space.



39. *Nihil Sub Sole Novum, What Donna Tartt Said,* 2001

The wall perpendicular to this one was painted from floor to ceiling in a 'deep madder' flat acrylic wall paint. All of the blemishes on the wall – scratches, nail holes etc – were painted around and left exposed. The damage to the wall is a literal one, its appearance in the subsequent wall-painting as detail serves to ground the monochrome field whilst in the wall viewed as a whole it floats free of that same field.

Opposite to the grid painting was a mural of the same proportions to that grid, painted in the same colours and using the same perspective distortion. The wall around this painting was also left bare. Drawn onto the grid was an image taken from a pornographic magazine. This image treated with the same strategies employed in the painting of the grid lost all of its initial explicit detail. The edges were blurred in contrast to the edges of the grid which were painted as hard

edges. All of the certainties of the image, its intentional focus on detail, was subverted; the certainties re-positioned as blurred and out of focus.

The rest of the venue was painted a perfect white and left. One small painting on aluminium was hung at the very far end of the space completely at odds with the treatment of the rest of the space.

Whilst this work clearly addresses issues which arise in the project it does so in a way which seems to offer an extension to the parameters opening up new avenues to be explored: the inclusion of images derived from a literal damage as well as images outside the remit of Minimalism.

40. *Nihil Sub Sole Novum*, 2001

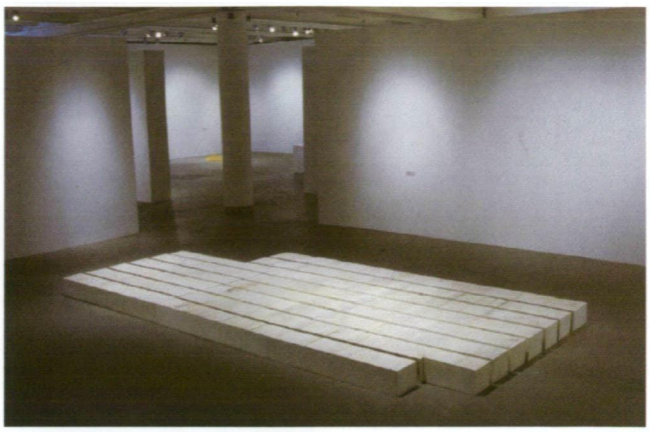
41. *Spill No.2* as part of *Nihil Sub Sole Novum*, 2001

APPENDIX 2: Rachel Whiteread and Martin Creed

42. Rachel Whiteread, *House*, 1993

Rachel Whitread's 'House' (1993 – 1994) in many ways typifies the idea of the Minimalist void which has filled with content. Seen from a distance I would have called 'House' Minimal. Getting closer to the work however also meant getting closer to the subject matter which was definitely not Minimal. Caught on the surface of the plaster cast of the inside of house was evidence of everyday life – soot stains from the fire place, the indentation of peeling wall paper flocking. As with all of Whiteread's work that I had seen up to this point, the details contradict the initial reading and the easy attribution to a particular precedent (even more obvious in a work such as *untitled (Floor)*, 1992). It is this contradiction, perhaps equal to Richter's "jammed signal", that is of interest with regard to this project. The expectation that the work is more of the same 'cool aesthetic' of Minimalism is displaced by the real presence of life – evidence of the everyday.

43. *House*, (detail)

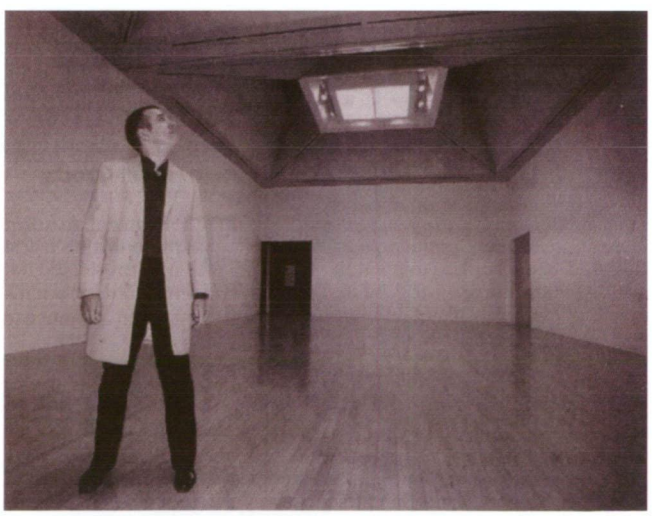


44. Rachel Whiteread, *untitled (Floor)*, 1992

Martin Creed's brand of extreme Minimalism has, at the time of writing, just won the Turner Prize. *Work #227: the lights going on and off,* is just that, and a room full of nothing. It is perhaps a complete emptying out of the Minimalist cube, ridding it of even its formal values, creating not the Minimal void but, evoking by its absence, the presence of the real world. As Creed maintained when asked what particular problems his work posed:

" Oh, nothing... everything. All I want is to make things, beautiful things that I like, things that somehow include the whole world within them."[1]

Creed's mimmicking of Minimalism takes a face value to an extreme, his intention being to invert the blank space, perhaps rewriting Eva Hesse's statement "It is something. It is nothing" to read "It is nothing. It is everything."



44. Martin Creed with Work #227: the lights going on and off, 2001

[1] Martin Creed interviewed by Rachel Campbell-Johnston, *The Times,* Tuesday 11th December, 2001

APPENDIX 3: LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. François Boucher, *Landscape in Arabesque Framing,* 174?, 1.24m x 1.09m, oil on canvas. (*French Paining in the XVIIIth,* S. Rocheblave. Photo: Barry)
2. Boucher, detail
3. Neil Haddon, *Patch No.1 & 3* (detail), 2001. High gloss enamel paint on aluminium panel, 240cm x 240cm. Photo: Simon Cuthbert
4. Carl Andre, *144 Magnesium Square,* 1969. Magnesium, 1 x 365.8 x 365.8cm (*Minimalism,* David Batchelor. Photo: Tate Gallery)
5. Donald Judd, *untitled,* 1963. Cadmium red light oil on wood, 49.5 x 114.3 x 77.5cm. (*On Abstract Art,* Briony Fer)
6. Donald Judd, *untitled (DJ 89-20),* 1989. Painted aluminium, 30.5 x 90 x 30.5cm. (*On Abstract Art,* Fer)
7. Robert Morris, *untitled,* 1965/71. Mirror plate glass and wood, 91.4 x 91.4 x 91.4cm. (*Minimalism,* Batchelor)
8. Dan Flavin, *untitled (to the 'innovator' of Wheeling Peachblow),* 1968. Fluorescent light and fittings, 245 x 244.3 x 14.5cm. (*Minimalism,* Batchelor)
9. Sol LeWitt, *Serial Project 1 (A,B,C,D),* 1966. Stove enamel on aluminium, 83 x 576 x 576cm. (*Minimalism,* Batchelor)
10. Sol LeWitt, *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes,* 1974. Mixed media. (*Minimalism,* Batchelor)
11. Sarah Morris, *Aluminium Fence,* 1997. Household gloss on canvas, 183 x 183cm. (*Modern Worlds.* Photo: MOMA Oxford)
12. Sarah Morris, *Midtown – Conde Nast,* 1999. Household gloss on canvas, 214 x 214cm (*Modern Worlds.* Photo: MOMA Oxford)
13. Sarah Morris, *The Mirage (Las Vegas),* 1999. Household gloss on canvas, 214 x 214cm (*Hybrids.* Photo: Tate Gallery)
14. Gerhard Richter, *St. Andrew,* 1988. Oil on canvas, 200 x 260.35cm. (*Gerhard Richter The London Paintings,* Anthony D'Offay Gallery)
15. Gerhard Richter, *St. James,* 1988. Oil on canvas, 200 x 260.35cm. (*Gerhard Richter The London Paintings,* Anthony D'Offay Gallery)
16. Gerhard Richter, *Red (821),* 1994. Oil on canvas, 200 x 320cm (*On Abstract Art,* Fer)
17. Gerhard Richter, *AB, Rhombus (851-1),* 1998. Oil on canvas, 186 x 209cm. (*Gerhard Richter 1993 – 1998,* Anthony D'Offay Gallery)
18. Gerhard Richter, *Tote,* 1988. Oil on canvas, 62 x 62cm. (*Gerhard Richter,* Edition Cantz)
19. Gerhard Richter, *Zelle,* 1988. Oil on canvas, 200 x 140cm. (*Gerhard Richter,* Edition Cantz)
20. Gary Hume, *Roots,* 1993. Gloss paint on formica panel, 218.5 x 183cm. (*Gary Hume,* Whitechapel Art Gallery)
21. Gary Hume, *Four Subtle Doors II,* 1989. Gloss paint on four canvases, 213.4 x 589.3cm. (*Gary Hume,* Whitechapel Art Gallery)

22. Gary Hume, *Four Doors II,* 1990. Gloss paint on four canvases, 213.4 x 589.3cm. (*Gary Hume,* Whitechapel Art Gallery)
23. Gary Hume, *Kate,* 1996. Gloss paint on aluminium, 234 x 164cm. (*Gary Hume,* Whitechapel Art Gallery)
24. Gary Hume, *Messiah,* 1998. Gloss paint on aluminium, 208.5 x 116.8cm

The following works are all by Neil Haddon, unless stated.

25. *20 Paintings,* 1998. Mixed media on canvas, MDF panels, and paper on canvas, dimensions variable, photo: Jefford Walker
26. *Idle Shift,* 1999. Flat household acrylic on canvas, dimensions variable, photo: Jan Dallas
27. *Wear No.1,* 1999. High gloss enamel paint on canvas, 165 x 165cm, photo: Jan Dallas
28. *Wear No.3.* 2000. High gloss enamel paint on aluminium, 117 x 117cm, photo: Jefford Walker
29. *Wear No.4*, 2000. High gloss enamel paint on canvas, 210 x 190cm, photo: Jefford Walker
30. *Patch No.*1, 2001. High gloss enamel paint on two aluminium panels, 240 x 240cm, photo: Jefford Walker
31. *Patch No.2*, 2001. High gloss enamel paint on canvas, 114 x 114cm, photo: Jefford Walker
32. *Foil No.1,* 2001. Flat household acrylic paint on canvas, 165 x 165cm, photo: Simon Cuthbert
33. *Foil No.4,* 2001. Flat household acrylic paint on canvas, 165 x 165cm, photo: Simon Cuthbert
34. *Patch No.1 & 3,* 2001. High gloss enamel paint on two aluminium panels, 240 x 250cm, photo: Simon Cuthbert
35. *Breach No.1,* 2002. High gloss enamel paint on canvas, 165 x 165cm, photo: Simon Cuthbert
36. *Breach No.2,* 2001. High gloss enamel paint on canvas, 100 x 100cm, photo: Simon Cuthbert
37. & 38. *Not Quite Cadmium Red Light,* 1998 -. Flat household acrylic on cardborad boxes, dimensions variable, photos: Jeffoed Walker and Jan Dallas
39.- 41. *Nihil Sub Sole Novum,* 2001. Flat household acrylic on painted onto existing walls and aluminium panel., photo: Simon Cuthbert
42. Rachel Whiteread, *House,* 1993 (detail). Mixed media. (*Rachel Whiteread House,* Phaidon Press)
43. Rachel Whiteread, *House,* 1993. Mixed media. (*Rachel Whiteread House,* Phaidon Press
44. Rachel Whiteread, *untitled (Floor),* 1992. Plaster, 24.1 x 280.6 x 622.3cm (*On Abstract Art,* Fer)
45. Martin Creed, *Work #227: the lights going on and off,* 2001. (*The Times,* Tuesday 11th December, 2001. Photo: Reuters

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APPENDIX 5: CV

1999	Part-time MFA and Lecturer, Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania
1990 – 96	Resident in Barcelona, Spain
1990	Art and English workshops, Artajona, Navarre, Spain
1989	Art workshops in secondary schools
1988 – 90	Art workshops for special needs groups
1987 – 90	B.A. (Hons), West Surrey College of Art and Design
1985 – 87	BTEC Diploma, Art and Design, Epsom School of Art and Design
1967	Born Epsom, Surrey, England

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2001	Fisher's Ghost Art Prize Exhibition, Campbelltown City Gallery
	CAST Members Show, Hobart
	The Hutchins Prize Exhibition, The Long Galley, Hobart
2000	*Square Circle Rectangle,* Entrepot Galleries, Hobart
	Cache, Glen Eira City Gallery
	Artfair 2000, Melbourne, with Bett Gallery
	Buffalo, Letitia St Studios, Hobart
	Shifting Axis, Bett Gallery
	CAST Members Show
	The Hutchins Prize Exhibition, The Long Galley, Hobart
1999	*Cache,* CAST
	Warp - Neil Haddon, Phillip Watkins, John Vella, curated by David Hansen, CAST and touring
	The City of Hobart Art Prize Exhibition, Carnegie Gallery, Hobart
	The Hutchins Prize Exhibition, The Long Galley, Hobart
1998	*Upbeat and Lively,* Bett Gallery
	Sixth Australian Contemporary Art Fair, Melbourne, with Dianne Tanzer Gallery
	Trust Bank Art Award Exhibtion (highly commended)
	Making Waves, Dianne Tanzer Gallery
1997	*Poets and Painters,* Dick Bett Gallery, Hobart
	Trust Bank Art Award Exhibition, Launceston
	Logan City Art Prize Exhibition
	The Hutchins Prize Exhibition, The Long Gallery, Hobart
1996	ARCO, Madrid, with Galeria Carles Poy
	Toowoomba Regional Art Prize Exhibition
	Logan City Art Prize Exhibition
1995	*La Pintura Considerada Como Una de las Bellas Artes,* Galeria Carles Poy, Barcelona
	Poral Buit / Medio al Vacio, Galeria Carles Poy
	Se Alquila, Barcelona
1990	*Young Painters,* James Hockey Gallery, Farnham

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2001 *Nihil Sub Sole Novum,* LSSp, Hobart
1998 *Purblind,* Gallery Dunce Hobart
Purblind, Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne
Artspace / Workplace, Moonah Arts Center
1996 Galeria Carles Poy, Barcelona
1994 The British Council, Barcelona
1992 Galeria Carles Poy, Barcelona

OTHER THINGS

2001 Coordinator LSSp Project Space, Letitia St Studios
Recipient Arts Tasmania Development Grant
2000 Recipient Arts Tasmania Development Grant with Letitia St Studios
1998 Recipient Arts Tasmania Development Grant
Artist Talks Forum, Australian Contemporary Art Fair, Melbourne
1996 *Past Lives,* performance by Jefford Horrigan at the Adam Gallery, London
1995 *Sapering Moments,* performance by Peter Hone, Barcelona

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El Pais - Cultura, Spain, 13/2/95
'Neil Haddon - Galeria Carles Poy', *El Punto de las Artes,* Spain 2/9/92
'Entre L'Occultacion y la Transparencia', *Avui,* Spain, 4/10/92
'Neil Haddon', *Lapiz,* No.89, Sept. 89

COLLECTIONS

Artbank, Australia
The British Council, Barcelona
Colección Sunyol, Barcelona